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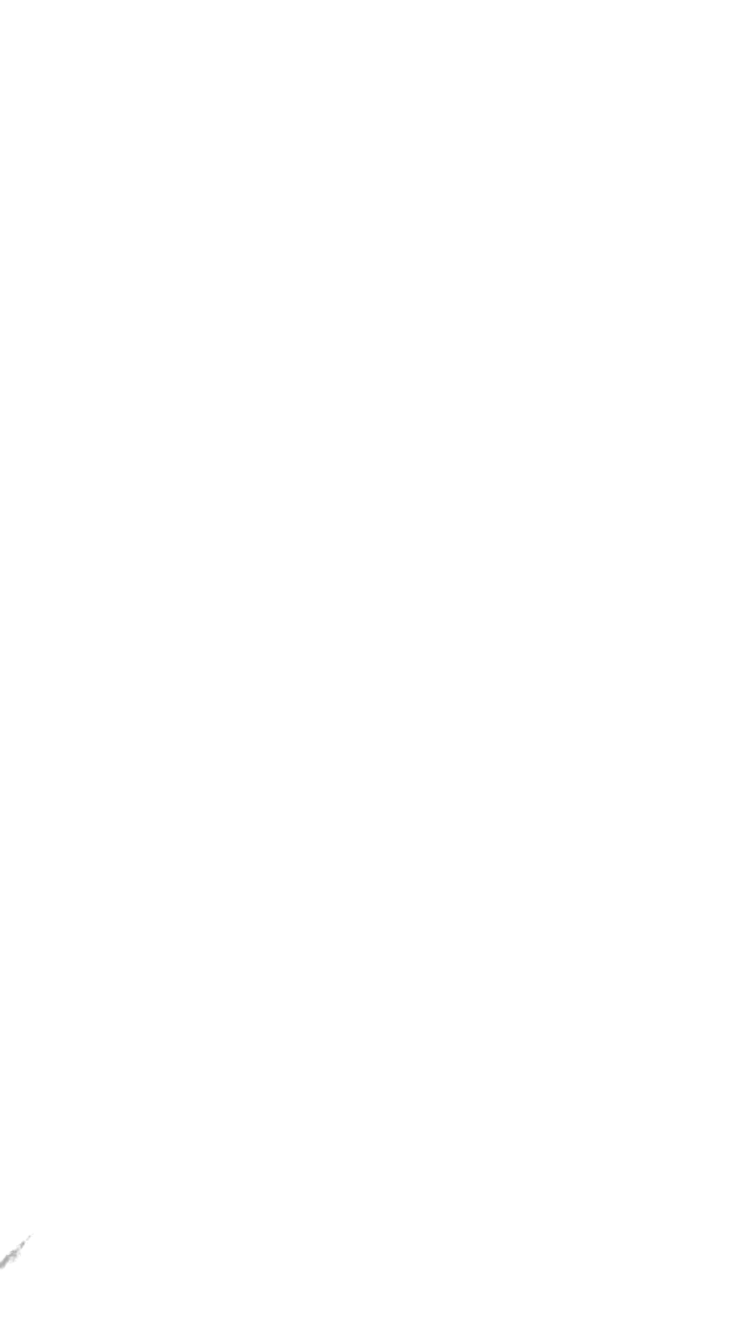
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VOL. VI.





SPECIMENS  
OF  
FOREIGN STANDARD LITERATURE.

EDITED  
BY GEORGE RIPLEY.

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VOL. VI.  
CONTAINING  
INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS,  
FROM THE FRENCH  
OF  
JOUFFROY.

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BOSTON:  
HILLIARD, GRAY, AND COMPANY.

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M.DCCC.XLI.

As wine and oil are imported to us from abroad, so must ripe understanding, and many civil virtues, be imported into our minds from foreign writings; — we shall else miscarry still, and come short in the attempts of any great enterprise.

MILTON, *History of Britain, Book III.*

INTRODUCTION

TO

ETHICS,

INCLUDING A

CRITICAL SURVEY OF MORAL SYSTEMS,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

JOUFFROY.

By WILLIAM H. CHANNING

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BOSTON:  
HILLIARD, GRAY, AND COMPANY.

M.DCCC.XLI.

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JOUFFROY.





# JOUFFROY.

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## LECTURE XIII.

### THE SELFISH SYSTEM.—BENTHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

By the plan marked out for this course of lectures, I should, perhaps,—having exhibited the selfish system under the form in which Hobbes presented it,—pass at once to the consideration of some new system, without stopping to discuss any other form which it has assumed. But I feel that I ought to make an exception with regard to one philosopher—I mean Bentham. The justly-acquired celebrity which this remarkable jurist enjoyed during his lifetime, and which will long endure, as well as the practical influence which his opinions and writings have exerted on his own country and on several parts of Europe, justify me in making this digression. And you, gentlemen, I am sure, will not regret to follow me.

All, who desire to obtain a clear and correct idea of Bentham's system and opinions, should read the work in which he has himself exhibited his philosophy. It was published in 1789, although it had been printed

nine years before, and is entitled, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation." In this work, Bentham, who was, by nature, nowise a metaphysician, has endeavored to ascend to the philosophical principles from which his system was drawn. It is little known among us, and has never been translated. Our only acquaintance with Bentham is through his detached minor pieces, and the exact and lucid exposition of his opinions, given by M. Dumont of Geneva, in three volumes, under the title of *Traité de la Legislation Civile et Pénale*. No one can estimate more highly than I do this admirable work, or feel more sensible of the service which has been rendered, in substituting, for the concise and rude forms of speech which Bentham adopted, a clear and agreeable style of expression. But still, in this case, as in all others, we should consult the author himself, if we would really be acquainted with his opinions; and I repeat, therefore, that the original work of Bentham, above mentioned, is the true source to which our inquiries should be directed.

It may not be amiss, if I add to this mention of his works a slight sketch of their general character and spirit.

We may designate in two words the distinctive trait of Bentham's philosophy, and at the same time its fundamental principle, by saying that Bentham was not a metaphysician, but a jurist. This distinction explains, as it appears to me, both the direction which his ideas assumed, and the peculiar characteristics of his manner. Allow me, in a few words, to illustrate my meaning.

No one would say, that it was the duty of the legislator to pay no regard to the moral quality—the good or ill desert of actions. On the contrary, he is bound to consider this deeply; and he is no legislator who neglects to do so. This is so plain, that even Bentham himself, as I shall by and by have occasion to show, is unable to explain existing laws, or any laws, except upon this hypothesis. If legislators, in connecting penalties with actions, had reference only to the evil which society incurs, penal laws would be very different from what they now are. The principle of exactly proportioning penalties to the injury done to society, would produce a scale of punishments very unlike to any thing which we find in any code whatever. And a sole regard to the interests of society would not, in the least, require the precautions with which the execution of these laws is guarded, and the various guaranties which protect the criminal. If you will open any criminal code, you will find many regulations, showing that regard is paid as well to the moral quality of acts as to the interests of society; and this I shall fully establish, I hope, when I come to the discussion of social ethics. And yet, gentlemen, notwithstanding this, it is perfectly true, that the real object,—the peculiar and immediate object—of all law is the prevention of such acts as may injure society. It is the interest of society which occupies the attention of the legislator, and all his efforts are directed to its preservation. The end at which the jurist aims, therefore, is an entirely different one from that of the moralist.

This point being established, gentlemen, it is very easy to understand how a jurist may be led to regard human actions under the single aspect of their influence upon society, until he conceives that this is the only mode of judging them, and learns to apply, in his estimate of their morality, the same test and principle by which he determines their legality. Every candid jurist would probably confess, that he was obliged to guard himself against such a tendency. But Bentham, being peculiarly a jurist, and in no sense a philosopher, did not guard himself from this tendency: he yielded to it, and was thus led to believe and support the principle, that the only difference to be distinguished between acts, is the degree in which their consequences are beneficial or injurious; and that utility, therefore, is the only test by which they can be judged.

Another peculiarity of a jurist, which is also characteristic of Bentham, is, that he lays down his axiom of utility as the test of the moral quality of actions, without supporting it by any psychological examination of the motives of human volition; as if philosophy was nowise concerned in such a proposition, and could furnish no evidence either to confirm or to overthrow it. And in this respect it must be allowed, that there is a great difference between Hobbes and Bentham, and that the former has here greatly the advantage. Hobbes does not attempt to establish the selfish principle until he has, as he supposes, thoroughly analyzed human nature; until, from psychological examination, he has arrived at the conclusion, that the only difference between actions consists in

their fitness to produce pleasure or pain. Following this method, Hobbes discusses the purely scientific question, and seeks to determine the motives by which, in the depths of our consciousness, actions are determined and influenced; or, in other words, the nature and number of those considerations, by which we are led to prefer certain courses of conduct to others, and thus to pass judgment upon them. This is the true scientific problem, to be examined and solved, before we can be justified in asserting what is, or is not, the proper test of the moral quality of actions. Hobbes has examined, discussed, and solved this problem, and deduced his system from this solution; while Bentham seems never to have suspected even that there was such a problem to be solved; for the very first step he takes is to lay down as an axiom a particular solution of this problem, as if it was really no problem at all. I am justified by this second consideration, therefore, in saying, that Bentham was not a philosopher, but a jurist.

Another characteristic of Bentham, which also justifies me in saying this, was the singular notion which he cherished of the novelty and originality of his system. Ignorant, indeed, must he have been of the whole history of philosophy to suppose this. The doctrine of utility a new one! Why, it existed in Greece even before the time of the sophists, who preceded Socrates, and was reduced to a system of unequalled perfection by Epicurus. who as much surpassed Hobbes, as a philosopher, as Hobbes did Bentham. The originality of Bentham's system is not in the principle on which it is founded, but in the

application of this principle to legislation. And here, I take at once the opportunity of saying, Bentham has, indeed, displayed a true superiority of mind, and has rendered lasting services to the human race. If Bentham showed any originality in his mode of presenting the ancient selfish system, it was in the boldness with which he professed it. He disguised in no way his principle of utility; he paid no respect to those other principles of conduct, which the majority of mankind have united in reverencing; but he laid down his principle, naked and bare, as the only motive from which men really act; he treated all other principles of our nature only with ridicule and contempt; and once having established his principle, he frankly and unhesitatingly admitted its legitimate consequences.

It was this boldness, gentlemen, in which Bentham was really original, that gained for him such fanatical supporters and warm opponents. No one could be the friend or foe of such a philosopher by halves. And thus the life of Bentham was one continued controversy; and his followers have been, in character, a sect. This has been owing, I repeat, to the peculiar disposition of Bentham, carried into his system,—to the intrepidity with which he professed a principle that shocks not only the good sense of men, but still more the most elevated principles of our nature, and which he, nevertheless, has admitted, with all its consequences, boldly, and without flinching. In this respect, Bentham and Hobbes were on a level, fellow-countrymen as they were. With a true English spirit, they were equally fearless and frank in express-

ing their opinions, however opposed they might be to the common sense of mankind.

Thus much I have thought it well to say of the general character of Bentham's system. It remains for me now rapidly to exhibit his leading doctrines, and the principal consequences which he deduced from them. And this I will attempt to do in as few words and as distinctly as possible.

In Bentham's view, all actions and objects would be equally indifferent, if they had not the property of producing pleasure or pain. This property is the only one by which we can distinguish or judge them. We seek or avoid objects, we desire or oppose actions, with a single reference to this. The desire of pleasure and the fear of pain are the only possible motives which can determine human conduct; and, consequently, pleasure is the only object of pursuit, and the sole end of human existence. These principles are, as you see, perfectly identical with those of Hobbes, and, indeed, are only a repetition of them. But, as I have just shown, Hobbes proves, or attempts to prove, them; Bentham regards them as axioms; and instead of wasting time in endeavoring to establish them, he leaves them to rest upon what to him appears to be their self-evident truth.

As Bentham thus makes no attempt to prove the justness of his principle, and offers us no means for testing the soundness of its foundation, let us for ourselves inquire whether this principle does really need no proof, and whether it is true that it cannot be proved.

In all science, says Bentham, we must set out from some truth or fact, which admits of no proof, and whence, as from a fountain, all reasonings flow. We,

of course, admit this assertion in its full extent ; for it is plain, that if there was no one truth which required no proof, nothing whatever could be proved ; for a proof is an established and acknowledged truth ; and therefore, if it is necessary that this truth itself shall be proved, there can be no proof of any thing. We have, then, to inquire whether, when a philosopher affirms that a certain motive governs all human determinations, he is advancing one of these principles, which, by their very nature, neither can nor need be demonstrated.

If a natural philosopher was discussing the question whether the currents of air in a certain country follow several or only one direction, would he have the right to assume, in support of his own theory, that no proof was required or could be offered on the subject ? Certainly not. The reply would instantly be made, that this was a question of fact to be determined by observation of the wind, through ten, twenty, or any number of years, and that only after such observation could it be known, whether the wind blew always in one direction, or in several directions. Far from being allowed to take a solution for granted, without supporting it by proofs, the natural philosopher would be bound to establish it upon numerous and exact observations ; for the question would be one of facts. And if he neglected to rest his theory upon such observations, it would be valueless. The case is precisely similar with regard to the question discussed by Bentham, and the solution which he has given of it. What is the only motive, or what are the various motives, which determine the human will ? This is the question. The will of man is active ; it is passing through the process



of volition continually ; the motives by which it is governed can be observed ; we can judge by observation whether these motives are numerous, or whether there is only one. It is, therefore, folly to say, when an answer is given to this question, that it cannot, and need not, be proved. It certainly can be proved from experience ; it ought to be so proved ; for this answer, far from being generally admitted, is often disputed. You assert that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the only motive to human volition. Others deny it. This would not be the case if your assertion represented an incontestable fact, a primary truth, which neither could, nor need, be proved. It is plain, therefore, that it can, and must, be proved, and that it must be supported by a reference to human nature. To this nature belongs the fact of volition. It is from observing this fact, then, that we are to determine whether it is governed by one, or by several, motives. If by one, then the assertion is a true one ; if by several, it is false. And observation, which is the natural proof of solutions of all moral questions, must decide. If we had no other means for ascertaining the character of Bentham, as a philosopher, than this single fact, that he considers it impossible and unnecessary to prove his favorite assertion, that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the only motive of human choice, it would be sufficient to convince us that his philosophical ability was but slight.

You see, from what has now been said, that the principle of utility rests, in Bentham's mind, upon his theory of human volition. He condescends, indeed, to announce this theory ; but, far from attempting to

demonstrate its truth, he denies that it can be demonstrated ; and this is an assumption which no one who knows any thing of the subject can admit.

Such are the great principles of Bentham's system. We hasten now to consider the conclusions which he draws from them.

And, first, he is led to make certain definitions. Setting out from the assumed truth, that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the sole motive of action, he determines the true meaning to be given to all words in use among moral philosophers, and attaches a precise definition to certain words, which he adapts and peculiarly appropriates to the explanation of his own ideas. Let me present you with some examples.

Bentham defines *utility*, — the property of any act or object to increase the sum of happiness, or to lessen the amount of suffering, in the individual, or the body of individuals, acted upon.

Now, if this is the true definition of *utility*, and if utility, according to Bentham's fundamental principle, so openly proclaimed, is the only quality by which actions can be judged and distinguished, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that this is the only sense in which we can employ, or understand, such expressions as the *lawfulness* of an action, the *justice* of an action, the *goodness*, or *morality*, of an action. Either, then, says Bentham, we must use these words in this acceptance, or use them without any meaning at all ; and in this he is perfectly consistent with the principles of his system.

With equal distinctness Bentham defines what should be understood by the *principle of utility*. The prin-

ciple of utility, he says, is that which determines the quality of actions by their twofold property of adding to the happiness or suffering of individuals or of communities. Such is the strict definition of the principle of utility. The definitions of a useful action, a useful measure, or a useful law, and consequently of all good, just, and legitimate acts, measures, and laws, are deduced naturally from it.

Bentham, desirous to have no blind disciples, either self-deceived or liable to be deceived, next proceeds to define the conditions by which it can be determined whether a person is a supporter or opponent of the principle of utility; or, what comes to the same thing, the conditions by which it may be known whether a person follows his standard. He who is guided, in his approval or disapproval of acts or objects, by the sole consideration of their beneficial or injurious properties, and who proportions his approbation or disapprobation to the degree in which they possess these properties, without admitting any other consideration whatever to influence his judgment, — such a one may justly be considered a disciple, and a friend of the principle of utility. But he, on the contrary, who pays the least regard, — no matter how small, — to any other test, in making up his judgments, is not only not a follower, but a foe, and full as much so as any who entirely reject and oppose the principle of utility.

According to Bentham's principle, the true interest of the individual is the greatest sum of happiness which he is capable of attaining, and the true interest of society is the greatest sum of happiness of all

the individuals who constitute it. These various definitions are all naturally derived from the main principle, and are so obvious that it is scarcely necessary thus to deduce them. But Bentham, fond as he was of precise notions and distinct statements, has minutely carried out a long series of definitions, into the detail of which it is quite unnecessary that we should follow him.

His own system being thus established, Bentham turns to the consideration of such principles as are either opposed to or distinct from that of utility; and of these he recognizes only two — first, the ascetic principle, or asceticism; and, second, the principle of sympathy or antipathy — as he denominates them. It is important that we should distinctly understand what Bentham's conception was of these two principles; because, according to him, all systems of ethics and legislation, which do not set out from the principle of utility, are derived necessarily and invariably from one or the other of these two principles.

Bentham defines the ascetic principle to be a principle which, like that of utility, determines actions to be worthy of approbation or disapprobation, according to their property of producing pleasure or pain, but which, unlike that of utility, pronounces those good which are productive of pain, and those evil which are productive of pleasure. This definition certainly has point, but, unfortunately, it lacks truth; for Bentham has mistaken an opinion that is merely accidental, and accessory to asceticism, for the principle itself. It is quite plain, that, by asceticism,

Bentham means that solution of the problem of human destiny which I have described to you as mysticism — a system which does, in conduct, often lead its professors to a course of conduct resembling that described by Bentham. That such a course of conduct is a mistaken one, I readily agree; but I entirely deny that it originates in the opinion that pleasure is an evil or pain a good. There have, indeed, been sects and individuals, who have taught that pleasure and pain are things of no consequence, and that it is a matter of indifference which we experience; but there never have existed any, who have laid it down as a principle, that an action is bad, because it is followed by pleasure, or good, because accompanied by pain. Such an absurdity has never found supporters, and the mystics are wholly guiltless of it. I have explained to you, at such length that I need not now go over the ground again, the reasonings by which the mystics were led to acts analogous to those attributed to them by Bentham; but those reasonings were very different from the ones assigned.

Still Bentham does thus define the principle of asceticism; and, positive here as elsewhere, he asserts, that whoever voluntarily sacrifices an atom of pleasure, as such, and condemns it, is therefore a partisan of the ascetic school. Such a declaration manifests, yet more strongly, that he regarded his principle as absolute and unconditional. It follows necessarily from this, — and, recoiling from no consequence whatever, he admits, — that every kind of pleasure, without exception, is good in itself; and, to show you how far he was willing to go, he takes, as an example,

the most abominable pleasure which an abandoned villain could feel in the commission of a crime, and says, unhesitatingly, that he who finds fault with such pleasure, and condemns or repels it, is just so far, and by so doing, an ascetic. The pleasure, according to Bentham, is not bad as pleasure, but is good; for all pleasure is good. In what sense, then, can it be considered bad? In this sense only, that the threatening consequences of the crime will produce so much suffering as entirely to overbalance the pleasure experienced. It is not on account, therefore, of the wickedness of the crime, that he condemns the pleasure which the bad man takes in its commission, but solely because its results will be injurious. Such, says Bentham, is the true meaning of the human mind, when it declares delight in crime to be bad; and the man who condemns this delight on any other ground is an ascetic.

Let us turn, now, to the other principle which Bentham refers to—the principle of sympathy and antipathy. Under this general name he classes all moral judgments, by which we determine that an action is good or bad, independently of a consideration of its consequences. Thus every moral philosopher, who decides upon the moral quality of an act upon any ground whatever except that of its utility, adopts the principle of sympathy or antipathy. You see at once what a variety of systems come under Bentham's second category. There are moral philosophers, for instance, who have asserted that man is endowed with a moral sense, which perceives the good or evil of actions, exactly as the taste perceives flavors, or

the smell odors. This was the doctrine of Hutcheson, and of many others. Whoever admits this to be true, asserts that the moral quality of acts is not determined by a reference to their consequences; or, in other words, he teaches that approbation and disapprobation have no reference to the consequences of acts, but are independent of this consideration. Such a principle as this comes, of course, under the general principle of sympathy and antipathy, as one of its forms. The same may be said of philosophers who have maintained that there is a natural distinction between good and evil — a distinction recognized by reason, and instantly perceived as the characteristic of every act, by which its moral quality is judged, independently of its beneficial or injurious consequences. Of course, this principle, which is the foundation of various systems, comes under Bentham's second category. Again, they who think that we have in our minds an innate and primitive law, variously denominated the law of nature, the moral law, the law of duty, which immediately judges actions as they occur, and decides that they are either good or bad, in proportion as they agree with or contradict it, — all philosophers who think this, adopt, according to Bentham, the principle of sympathy and antipathy. And, lastly, they who think, with me, that acts are good which conform to universal order, and that acts are bad which conflict with it, as they pay no regard to the consequences which may result from them, adopt also the principle of sympathy and antipathy.

Bentham recognizes, therefore, only two principles

of moral qualification—or, in other words, only two moral systems—distinct from his own; and these are, first, the system which, like that of utility, judges of acts by their consequences, but pronounces those good which produce pain, and those evil which produce pleasure, or the ascetic system; and, secondly, the system which judges of the moral quality of acts on some other ground, whatsoever it may be, beside the single one of their beneficial or injurious consequences, or the system of sympathy or antipathy.

He does, in passing, however, point out what may be considered a fourth, namely, the religious system, which places the rule of right and wrong—and, consequently, of the proper or improper—in the will of God. But, with good reason, he denies that this is a system at all, because we have still to determine what the rule is which the will of God prescribes; and, as the rule must necessarily be either one or the other of those pointed out by Bentham, the system must merge in that.

Such, then, are the systems which Bentham considers as opposed to his own, and which he pronounces to be false. Instead, however, of attempting to establish the principle of utility, he directs all his efforts to refute the others; and it is in this attempt that he exposes the defects of his own metaphysical science. It is here that we must look for the philosophy upon which his opinions rest; and to this point I shall direct my attacks, when I attempt the refutation of his principles.

Having thus described the principles of Bentham's system, and the definitions which he has deduced



from them, I will now explain to you some of their practical results. Here it is, as I have said, that our jurist displays his originality; and this is the part of his system which is truly interesting, and which alone I care to exhibit; for, otherwise, his system would be identical with that of Hobbes, which I have already discussed. The views which I am now about to present to you are the sources of the high reputation enjoyed by Bentham among students of jurisprudence. And it is by means of these views that he has exercised, and still continues to exercise, so beneficial an influence upon the great work of reforming and improving the laws of all Europe.

You will readily see that, in order to apply the principle of utility practically, it is not enough merely to know that the acts are good which produce more pleasure than pain, and those bad which produce more pain than pleasure, and that they are better or worse in proportion as they produce more or less pleasure or pain. Such principles would remain barren of results, unless we could discover some means of estimating the measure of good or evil resulting from any act, and of determining the relations between them. For, without this, any conclusions at which we might arrive would be useless in conduct. The great distinction of Bentham is, that he has, by an analysis which, though imperfect, is yet remarkable for its extent and depth, attempted to fix this standard of valuation of what he considers the moral good and evil of acts; that is, their property of producing pleasure or pain.

I will endeavor, gentlemen, rapidly to sketch the

elements of Bentham's moral arithmetic, while, at the same time, I advise all who would acquire a perfect knowledge of it to consult the work of Dumont, before referred to, or the original work of the author himself.

Bentham's first endeavor, in forming his method of moral calculation, is to enumerate and classify the various kinds of pleasure and pain. For, as it is the accompanying pleasure or pain which give their positive or negative value to actions and things, it is evidently impossible to measure their value, unless we previously are acquainted with all the kinds of pleasure and pain which they are fitted to produce, and which our nature is capable of receiving. It would carry us too far, and would not be worth our while, to enter into a description of the details of these classifications, arbitrary as all which have thus far been offered are; for it is not my object to teach Bentham's system, but simply to describe it.

This first element of the various kinds of pleasure and pain being once ascertained, Bentham next attempts to fix upon some method of determining their comparative value. And here I must enter somewhat into detail.

If two kinds of pleasure, the result of two different actions, are supposed, we must, before we can judge which of these actions is most useful, determine which kind of pleasure is highest in value. We need, therefore, some method by which to compare them. Such a method could be obtained, if we were acquainted with all the elements which should properly enter into our estimate of a pleasure. It is to the

discovery of these elements that Bentham has applied himself; and he has come to the following result — that, to determine the real value of any pleasure, we must consider it under these six principal relations : first, its intensity — for some pleasures are more vivid than others; second, its duration — for while one pleasure is of a nature to be prolonged, another is transient; third, its certainty — for the various pleasures which we must estimate in moral calculation are all future ones, and will follow as consequences the acts we purpose; the degree of certainty, therefore, with which they will accompany our act, is an element that must be taken into the account; fourth, its nearness — as one pleasure may ensue at the distance of a long interval after the performance of an act, while another will be immediate; fifth, its power of multiplying pleasure — for while some pleasures bring additional ones in their train, others do not; sixth, its purity — for one pleasure may be followed by consequences more or less painful, from which another is wholly exempt.

Such are the aspects under which pleasures and pains must be viewed, before we can determine their value. Only after having tried them by these tests, can we determine, with confidence, which of two actions is the most useful or injurious, the best or the worst, and judge of the difference existing between them. Thus much as to the intrinsic value of pleasures and pains, when compared together.

But another element must also enter into the calculation. Pleasures are not the same in nature to all persons, for there are individual differences which

affect their value. One person has not the same constitution, age, character, with another. There are differences of sex, of education, of habits, and of various other kinds. Now, it is plain that these differences in individuals will variously modify the sensations they experience, so that the same pleasure will not produce identical effects in all persons. Hence, in Bentham's moral calculations, there is a second element, which he has endeavored to bring as fully to light as he did the first, employing an exact analysis, for the purpose of determining all such circumstances as may combine to influence the sensibility of individuals, and thus alter the vividness of the pleasures and pains of which they are susceptible.

He separates these circumstances into two kinds—primary and secondary. Of the primary, I may mention temperament, the degree of health, strength or weakness of body, firmness or softness of disposition, habits, propensities, greater or less development of intellect; all of which circumstances influence, to a considerable degree, not only the intensity, but the durability also, of pains and pleasures, and other elements of their intrinsic value. Bentham draws up an exact catalogue of these various circumstances, and enters into a detailed discussion of them with great sagacity.

But further; if, before we can form our moral estimate of the value of pleasures and pains, we must, on account of the great differences between individuals, consider each individual by himself, our labor will be a most difficult one; for individuals themselves are often unaware of the circumstances which peculiarly affect them. Are there, then, no general cir-

cumstances, including these various other circumstances, which may, in some sort, be considered their natural signs, and serve as a ground-work for the acts of the legislator, who, though he cannot be acquainted with the character of each individual, may yet know the world, and the character of the various classes which make up society? Bentham thinks that there are such general circumstances; and he calls them *secondary* circumstances. They are general, and easily recognized, and indicate, with considerable certainty, wherever found, the presence of the primary circumstances. Sex, age, education, profession, climate, race, forms of government, religious opinions, are some of these general circumstances. If we had the time, it would be easy to show that they influence the sensibility only by means of the primary circumstances, which they include. Thus, for example, the feminine sex possesses a delicacy of organization and of dispositions, and a degree of intelligence, which communicate to the pleasures or pains experienced by them an intensity and durability, or, in other words, a value which makes them different from those experienced by man. Now, age, sex, religious opinions, and the circumstances of the second degree in general, are, unlike those of the first degree, discernible to a legislator; he can appreciate them, and, therefore, give them due weight in his calculations. For instance, he will not inflict punishments of equal severity upon women and men; because, in so doing, the pain produced would be unequal. I need only thus point out to you Bentham's

method of forming an estimate of pleasures and pains. You will comprehend it at once.

We have now considered three modes of calculating the value of pleasures and pains. But there are other modes. Thus far we have considered the pains and pleasures of individuals only; but there are pains and pleasures which extend to multitudes. Here, therefore, is a new element of moral calculation, and Bentham has carefully analyzed it. And it is in this analysis that we find, perhaps, his most original and important suggestions. He gives an exact and curious account of the manner in which the beneficial or injurious results of acts extend beyond the agent and the person whom they first affect, through wider and wider circles, till they reach the extreme limits of society. This very ingenious analysis gives us a calculation of all the good and evil which an act produces upon the individual directly subject to its influence, and a description of the laws by which these effects are propagated and transmitted. Bentham's passion for classification, which often is an inconvenience of his method, by obscuring instead of giving light, is here of great service; for his classification is just and true. Although the results to which he comes, would apply equally to good or evil influences, yet it is to the evil exclusively that he applies them, because it is chiefly to the prevention of these that legislators direct their efforts. They have but little power of multiplying good influences by their encouragements.

An evil act being supposed, — that is to say, an act

whose consequences are more injurious than beneficial, — Bentham, beginning with the evil which the agent inflicts on himself, proceeds to analyze those which ensue to society, and distinguishes them into evils of the first, second, and third classes. The first consists of such as affect certain individuals, who can be known and named. For instance, the evil caused by a robbery extends beyond the person robbed to his wife, children, and family. Independent of the first evil inflicted, there is, in such cases, an added and incidental evil, affecting certain individuals whom the lawgiver can have cognizance of, beforehand. Bentham denominates this an evil of the first class.

But the evils of a robbery extend beyond the family of the person robbed, to an indefinite number of individuals unknown. When a man is robbed, for instance, a greater or smaller portion of society hear of it, and are alarmed; this alarm is an evil, and every one may suffer from it. But this is not all. Independent of the alarm, the robbery does society an actual injury; for, on the one hand, men, who have never thought of such a mode of obtaining a subsistence, learn that it is practicable; and, on the other, the news of such success stimulates all rogues to redoubled boldness and activity. Here, then, are evils incidental to the first evil, but which affect persons unknown to the legislator. They form the evils of the second class.

There is a third class of evils, not, indeed, always produced by a bad action, but which it still naturally tends to produce. For example, when, in any com-

munity, robbery becomes so common as to create a universal alarm, and the danger becomes so great that the law is powerless to repress it; when such a state of things exists, as was prevalent throughout Europe in the middle ages, where brigands, too strong to be resisted, filled the land,—what is the consequence? All travelling ceases, and every citizen, giving himself up to discouragement, retires from occupations whose gains are insecure; general idleness ensues, productive of every vice; and the end of all is a complete disorganization of society. From this example we may see how bad actions,—besides the evils inflicted on the individual who immediately suffers, and on a certain number of his near connections,—besides those, too, produced by awakening an alarm, and by multiplying the sources of social wrongs,—have also a tendency to bring on that state of anarchy, which is the utter ruin of society. This tendency, the last and final result of bad deeds, Bentham calls an evil of the third class. Such is a brief and rapid sketch of this interesting portion of his system.

And now, gentlemen, you are possessed of all the elements of moral arithmetic, or, in other words, of the mode of estimating the usefulness or injuriousness of actions. These elements, you will observe, are four in number. They are—first, all the pleasures and pains of which human nature is susceptible; second, all the intrinsic circumstances which may tend to augment or impair the value of these pleasures and pains; third, the various circumstances which may produce different degrees of sensibility, and thus



indirectly modify the value of the pleasures and pains experienced by individuals; and, fourth and last, the multiplied consequences, which follow a beneficial or injurious action, and which, beginning from the immediate subject of these actions, extend to all who are connected with him, and, thus influencing wider and wider circles, end finally by affecting society at large.

Having thus described these various elements, it remains to be seen how Bentham employs them in forming his moral estimates.

The first question to be asked, of course, when any action is to be judged of, is this: "Is it a good or a bad action?" If it is useful, it is good; if it is injurious, it is bad; and it is useful or injurious according as its tendency is to produce more pleasure than pain, or more pain than pleasure. To answer the question, we must calculate all its possible effects, — its useful effects on the one side, and its injurious effects on the other, — and then weigh them together; if the scale inclines to the side of the useful, it is a good action; if to the side of the injurious, it is a bad one. The second question to be asked is this: "Of two actions, which are both either useful or injurious, which is the most so?" To answer this, we have but to follow an equally simple rule; we have only to balance the results of each, and at once it will be determined, by the preponderance of its effects, which of the two is the worse or better. And, finally, the third problem to be solved, in relation to actions, is this: "How shall we determine, among a given number of useful or injurious actions, the

relative goodness or badness of each?" You see at once that we must follow again the same method of comparison. Thus, gentlemen, it appears that, by means of his moral arithmetic, Bentham is enabled to solve all moral problems, and fix the moral value of every possible act.

This brings us to the application of the whole of this method, which no one would have thought of inventing, except for the purpose of exhibiting the value of the principle of utility. The question which a Benthamite proposes—and it is a fundamental question in legislation—is this: "Have we the right to consider certain actions as crimes, and to inflict penalties upon their agents?" This, with Bentham, is identical with asking—"Will such a measure be useful to society?" If it will not be useful, then we have no right to make laws, and there is no work for the legislator whatever. For what is a law? It is a prohibition of certain acts. And how can they be prohibited without some penalty? Laws cannot exist without a sanction.

To answer this fundamental question, as to the propriety of making laws and inflicting penalties, Bentham reasons as follows:—What is a crime? It is an act whose consequences are evil. We cannot designate as a crime that which produces good, or even indifferent, effects. Wherever this has been done, it was owing to ignorance. On the other hand, what is a penalty? It is an evil. Now, what is the end for which society is constituted? The attainment of the greatest possible amount of good. And what, then, is the duty of the legislator? It is

to adopt such measures as may be productive of this good. The question, therefore, proposed, as fundamental to all legislation, whether certain acts should be treated as crimes, and penalties inflicted upon the agent, reduces itself to a balancing of two evils. The act produces an evil, and the pain of the penalty is an evil. We have to inquire, therefore, in the first place, whether the penalty will tend to prevent the evil act — altogether or frequently; and, if so, whether, in the second place, the evil of the penalty is less than the evil consequent on the act. If it is less, then its effects are beneficial, and we have the right to condemn and punish the act. Such is Bentham's mode of solving the problem; and, in his view, it is the only possible solution. This principle being adopted, it becomes easy to prove that penalties may be effectual to prevent acts which are injurious to society, or, at least, to make them rare in occurrence. And equally easy is it to prove, that, in many instances, the evil of the penalty is infinitely small for society, in comparison with that which it suffers from the bad act. Hence it is just and proper to condemn and punish certain actions.

Having laid down this theory, Bentham next proceeds to seek the means by which a legislator may so influence society as to multiply beneficial actions, and lessen the number of injurious ones. And this leads him to a branch of ethical science called by M. Dumont "moral dynamics," whose object it is to determine the motives which may operate on the will, and of which the legislator may avail himself in shap-

ing men to his purposes. I will finish this lecture by a rapid sketch of Bentham's ideas on this subject.

A motive to action, according to Bentham, must be some pleasure or some pain; for it is his principle, that only these can influence our volitions. Pleasure and pain, therefore, are the only instruments which a legislator can employ; or, in other words, the only sanctions by which he can enforce his laws. In order to the full and distinct comprehension of this only means of legislative influence, Bentham has carefully examined pleasures and pains under this new aspect; that is to say, in view of their fitness to be used as sanctions of law, and motives in the hands of the legislator. He is led, by this mode of observation, to distinguish four classes of pains and pleasures, suitable to be employed as sanctions. The first consists of such as are the natural consequences of actions. Every act brings with it a train of agreeable or disagreeable consequences which may be foreseen, and thus become a motive to the will. To this class of pains and pleasures, Bentham gives the name of natural or *physical*. Independent of these direct consequences, there are others, which arise from our relations to our fellow-men. Thus; for instance, our bad acts bring upon us contempt and enmity. Besides the unpleasantness of this treatment to ourselves, there is additional suffering in the fact, that men are less disposed to oblige us, and to render to us "gratuitous services," to use Bentham's expression; and, according to him, the reason why we prize the benevolence of those around us, is, that this benevolence renders

them willing to aid us without recompense. This second class of pleasures and pains Bentham calls the *moral* sanction, or the sanction of honor and opinion. In the third place, our acts bring upon us pains and pleasures which are adjudged as penalties and rewards by the law; and these Bentham names the *legal* sanction. Finally, if we have a religious faith which teaches us to hope or fear that acts committed here, will be rewarded or punished hereafter, there arise pleasures and pains of a fourth class, which, although they belong to the future, are yet motives to present choice, and form a fourth kind of sanction, called by Bentham the *religious* sanction. Thus the natural, the moral, the legal, and the religious sanctions are the motives by which the human will can be directed, and which the legislator must employ as his instruments. There are no others to be found.

But can the legislator use all of these sanctions? Ought he to use them? Bentham distinguishes the line of demarkation between legislation and ethics. He shows, by admirable reasoning, what has, indeed, been often demonstrated, but never, perhaps, with equal clearness, that there are limits to legislation beyond which it should never go. The legislator has always at his command the legal sanction; he can connect penalties and rewards with acts; but the three other kinds of sanctions are not subject to his power. It is not the legislator, but the established nature of things, which connects with conduct the natural sanction; and it is opinion and faith which connect with it the moral and religious sanctions.

And, having no power to create these sanctions, neither can he control nor direct them. His true instrument of influence is the legal sanction; with this he can act, because he can employ it at his pleasure. But it does not, therefore, follow, that he is wholly to slight the others. By doing so, he incurs the risk, not only of losing the aid which they might give, but of weakening the influence of the legal sanction itself. These forces, which act independently of, and prior to his volition, may oppose, if he offends them,—may assist, if he conciliates them. The first care of the legislator, then, should be, not to array them in hostility against him; his second, to make them his auxiliaries.

Suppose, for example, that some religious opinion prevails in a country; what would be the consequence if the legislator should encourage, by legal sanction, such acts as this religion condemns, or forbid such as it commands. The religious sanction, placed in opposition to the legal sanction, would impair its influence, and weaken the restraints of law. This the legislator should carefully avoid, even when he considers the rites prescribed by religion injurious in their tendency, and the acts which it condemns beneficial. And why? Because the course he would recommend cannot, although a preferable one, be, under such circumstances, adopted; and because it is evident that the greatest good of society will be best secured by gaining the aid of the religious sanction, which, if unopposed now, may come to his assistance in other cases, where it will not only strengthen the legal sanction, but govern those over

whom the legal sanction exerts no control. The same may be said of the habits and customs every where prevalent. The legislator, in disregarding them, arrays the moral against the legal sanction, and his laws become odious as well as powerless. On the other hand, by making sacrifices to this mighty power of opinion, he will be amply remunerated by securing for his enactments the support of public feeling and national sentiment. These examples will suffice to illustrate Bentham's idea, and to show how rich and varied are his developments of it. Bentham studied legislation with profound attention, and consecrated his long life to the observation of society; and his works abound, therefore, with views of the greatest practical utility. Led, as I have been, into various criticisms, and compelled, as I have felt, to bring various objections against the fundamental principles of his system, I am happy to have the opportunity of thus testifying my respect.

Having thus established the limits between ethics and legislation, Bentham proceeds to the consideration of legislation in itself, and lays down the foundations for a penal and a civil code. We will follow him into these practical discussions, when we come to these subjects in the order of our studies. But at present we must omit the consideration of them. I have now given you a summary of Bentham's theoretical opinions; I have pointed out his fundamental principle, the end at which he aims, and the method he pursues. In my next lecture, I propose to test, rigorously, the validity of the whole system;

for the objections which I have made to Hobbes, may, with equal force, be brought against Bentham, since the great principles of these two philosophers are identical.



## LECTURE XIV.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I endeavored to give you a true, although a very general idea of the system of Bentham. If this writer had attempted to prove the truth of his principles, by reasoning, I should have felt it my duty to refute his arguments; but, as he asserts that the principle of utility needs no proof, and is self-evident, what I have already said in reference to Hobbes will apply equally here.

But Bentham, although he offers no proofs of the truth of his own doctrines, does attack those which differ from them. Confident of his own principle, he is entirely occupied with the prejudicial influence exerted by opposite principles, and devotes all his energies to the exhibition of their erroneous nature. And short as this polemical portion of his work is, yet it is here that we must look for the only traces of philosophy to be found in his writings. In the present lecture, then, I will set before you the principal arguments which he uses, and will endeavor to reply to them; because, if any thing could have the effect of making those converts to Bentham's system, who are

doubtful about his main principle, it is, undoubtedly, his objections to all other systems.

I have already explained some of the causes which have given Bentham authority, and have procured him zealous disciples. And now, I would say, that we might, with reason, consider, as one among these causes, the fact, that he offers no proof in favor of his system. When a philosopher lays down a principle, and offers his arguments to support it, his adherents know the ground upon which they admit it; and, however complete may be their conviction, it is still a reasonable one, and can never become impassioned or fanatical. But when, on the other hand, a philosopher lays down his principle, and asserts that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it, then those who receive it adopt it upon his authority, and because the master says it, and room is given for fanaticism. This is what Bentham did; and his feeling, that all proof of his doctrine was unnecessary, reappears in his mode of attacking other systems; for, instead of entering into a serious and full discussion of them, he merely points out the way which one should take, who wished to refute them; so that what he says is rather ridicule than criticism. I repeat, therefore, Bentham's astonishing confidence in his own opinions inspired a like faith in his disciples; and here we see the explanation of their unquestioning assent to whatever he either said or wrote, and the blind zeal with which they defend him.

But a cause, yet more direct and powerful, of the success of Bentham's system, is the fact, that it is of a kind that recommends itself to a class of men

who are proud of their own opinions, and who complacently call themselves practical men—a class worthy of much esteem, and eminently serviceable to society, but yet least calculated of any to distinguish truth from error, in matters of science. Understand my exact meaning, gentlemen; again I say, I honor the men who are called practical, and am perfectly aware of their merits; in all respects, I am most ready to acknowledge their claims, but I deny that the character and habits of their minds are such as fit them for the discovery of truth, or such as entitle them to speak with authority upon scientific questions.

The peculiar characteristic of the practical man, is, that he sees and comprehends nothing which all the world does not see and clearly comprehend, and that he regards and acknowledges nothing as true beyond this; the limit of the most ordinary intelligence, is the limit, he thinks, of certainty; and thus he imposes upon science the narrow range of the most common mind.

Setting out from this principle, the practical man divides all that has been, or can be a subject of thought, into the two divisions of speculation and of fact; and rejecting, without exception, all that is comprehended within the former, he adopts every thing included by the latter. He does not employ these two words, *speculation* and *fact*, in their general acceptation, however, because he designates by the former name whatever he cannot comprehend.

And, first, the practical man calls every thing *speculation*, that has not a direct and close connec-

tion with facts, rejecting, as speculative, all lengthened inductions which it demands some little effort to follow. And thus it often happens that the very strictest reasoning is, in his judgment, mere speculation.

Again, practical men will not admit all kinds of facts even; there is a large class which they reject; I mean facts which are not sensible—that is to say, which do not fall under the observation of either of our five natural senses; so that moral and intellectual, and in a word, all facts, communicated by consciousness, are to them chimerical; and yet this class comprehends at least one half of the phenomena presented to the consideration of the human mind.

Once more; in denying this large division of the facts which fall under our observation, practical men of course deny and cast aside all truths discovered from reasoning by induction or deduction; and, consequently, they reject all sciences based upon these truths; to their apprehension, such considerations are speculative and worthless.

The strictly practical mind goes yet further; it will not admit all sensible facts even; whatever is distant and far removed in space or time, becomes doubtful and unworthy of regard. An event that occurred in Rome two thousand years ago, or which is taking place in China now, or a phenomenon in the heavens, noticed by the astronomer through his glass, is, from being so remote, a thing of speculation.

And not only must a fact be sensible and near, to

satisfy the practical man, but it must also be well known by all the world, and it must have been observed a thousand times: a fact that is novel and unwonted is a speculative thing.

Finally, among facts well known and often observed, only the larger and more important ones seem, to the practical man, worthy of account; the lesser ones he wholly overlooks; in the tree, he sees only the trunk and the main branches; the leaves are too much matters of speculation to be regarded.

Such is the logic of the practical mind; and its psychology is a direct and natural result.

Practical men admit only those faculties in a man whose effects they can appreciate. They make much of a good stomach, of strong limbs, of the five natural senses, and of that common sort of understanding, which, when it is cold on a December evening, conjectures that it will freeze during the night. But as to faculties more refined and elevated in nature, they either despise them, or deny their existence; they have no use for them whatever, and very possibly do not possess them at all.

They consider as foolish, the men in whom such faculties are strongly developed and active. A poet, a painter, a religious man, a metaphysician, an algebraist, a literary man, are, to them, strange monsters.

They consider as idle stories all the products of these faculties. A volume of Lamartine, a dialogue of Plato, an academic memoir on inscriptions, a formula of Laplace, a landscape of Poussin, a beautiful passage of historical writing, are to them mere

trifles, which may amuse, perhaps, the eccentric, but are quite unworthy, because offering nothing solid, to attract the attention of a practical mind. Canals, railroads, steamboats, prices, labor, agriculture, commerce, whatever has value and is salable, these, and these alone, have real worth and importance.

Apply, now, these principles to morals, gentlemen, and you at once have the system of Bentham.

The elevated and impulsive emotions, which act upon our nature, and influence, in so great a degree, our conduct, have no real existence for the practical man; he sees them not, or despises them, and leaves them to women and children.

He admits and recognizes only the motive of interest, or, in other words, happiness; but he excludes from his idea of interest the delicate pleasures derived from the exercise of our highest and noblest powers. The only interests which he can appreciate, are such as are palpable, and can be touched, measured, weighed. He could not comprehend Epicurus, even if he should read him; but he does not read him,—for he was a philosopher and an ancient; he doubts even whether such a man ever existed,—for who can tell what happened two thousand years ago?

Morality is for him a matter of calculation; and it is by sums of addition and subtraction that he judges, in each case, of the propriety of a course of conduct. As a practical man is his standard of comparison, it seems to him as if all the world were governed by the spirit of calculation. He neither believes in nor doubts of a Deity; he does not think about the subject at all; it is too refined and abstract

for him. And, confined in his own narrow round of ideas, he is positive, confident, unhesitating, and content.

Practical men are entirely persuaded that they govern the world, because they every where float on the surface; they make the laws and administer them; they manufacture, and buy, and sell; they are the consumers;—but they never seem to be aware that this world, which they suppose is under their direction, is a mighty force, that, in its movement, is sweeping them onward.

The outward and apparent revolutions in society, which are the only ones apparent to them, conform to their ideas, while the movers of them are hidden from their view; and thus they take the mill-wheel for the water that forces it to turn.

Bentham, gentlemen, belonged to this class that I have now described; and he had all the energy and enterprise, all the sagacity and confidence, which characterize practical men. He could not but adopt, then, such a system as his own; and, encountering a host of other men, similarly constituted and disposed, he naturally delighted them, and rallied them around him. Practical men, the world over, pledged each other to support his doctrine; and here we see the grand and true cause of his success.

And now let us look at these mighty objections, brought in array by Bentham, against all systems which do not concentrate in interest the various motives of human volition. It is in the first chapter of his "Introduction to the Principles of Ethics and Poli-

tics" that the most important part of his controversial writings may be found. He there, in the first place, declares that interest is the sole motive of volition, and maintains that the assertion needs no proof; and then passes on, not to a refutation of the philosophers who have based their systems of ethics and politics on a different foundation, but to an indication of the mode of reasoning by which an advocate of the principle of utility may convince them of their error, or, at least, reduce them to silence. And the mode in which, according to Bentham, a utilitarian should proceed to argue with an opponent of the principle, is as follows:—

In the first place, says Bentham, every body admits that interest, or the pursuit of well-being, is one motive of human volition. So manifest is this, that even the most extravagant defenders of opposite systems do not pretend to deny it. Whoever, then, may be the person with whom you are arguing, he will admit the principle of utility to be one among the moving springs of human action; only, in addition to this, he asserts that some other principle is also active—in this alone does he differ from you. Well; ask him now to analyze this other principle, and to examine whether it is really a distinct one, or whether it is not interest under a new and different form. This seldom fails to produce conviction; for there are few men, who, when they ask themselves what they mean by the words *good* and *evil*, *virtue* and *vice*, *honor* and *meanness*, will not admit that they use them in the sense in which they are employed



in the system of utility; and thus you may make converts, says Bentham, of the unreflecting opponents of your principle.

But suppose that, according to his sincere conviction, your antagonist does admit, in addition to the principle of utility, some other principle, truly distinct from it; in this case, it must be the principle of sympathy or antipathy. It is the peculiar characteristic of the principle of utility, that it determines the quality of actions, and judges of their title to approbation or disapprobation, by a view of their consequences. We can conceive of but one different principle from this; for, if we do not judge of acts by their consequences, we must judge of them by some consideration, independent of these consequences; or, in other words, we must associate naturally with acts a sentiment of approval or disapproval anterior to, and quite independent of, the perception of the effects of the action; and, under whatever form of expression you may conceal it, the fact remains unchanged, and constitutes what I call, says Bentham, the principle of sympathy or antipathy. But, if every man does thus attach an *à priori* idea of good or evil to actions, one of two things must happen; either that a single individual will consider himself as having the right of imposing his peculiar moral judgments upon all men, or else that each one will have his own views of right, and will follow them in conduct. According to the first hypothesis, you may say to the opponent of utility, Your principle is tyrannical; for the mere fact, that you judge in a particular way of actions, and that your reason or

instinct determines one to be good and another bad, gives you no right to impose your private sentiment upon all human beings; for this would be to substitute your instinct for theirs—to subject their judgment to your own—and, therefore, the exercise of such a principle is a tyranny over the human race. On the other hand, if you allow an equal authority to the sentiments of each individual in his estimate of actions, inasmuch as individuals are different, their judgments will be various, and thus the principle is a source of anarchy. There is no escape from this dilemma, if you renounce the idea that actions are to be judged by their consequences; for the moment that you abandon this test, you substitute, for consequences which are positive and can be calculated, and which present the same appearance to all men, mere sentiments, as the basis for moral judgments—that is to say, facts peculiarly individual, and consequently variable—sentiments which it is tyrannical to impose, and anarchical to recognize, as a basis for moral judgments.

This argument being exhausted, says Bentham, let us go further; let us ask the opponent of the principle of utility whether his *à priori* principle, by which he pretends that acts are estimated, is a blind one or not. If blind, then is it a pure instinct; it can neither be justified nor explained; and all that we can say of it is that it exists. If it is not blind, then it is rational; or, in other words, it is a law and rule, applied by yourself, and from which you deduce your *à priori* estimate of actions. If such is the position of your adversary, continues

Bentham, demand of him an explanation of the nature of this high law, by which he judges that an act is good or bad. Examine this rule with him, and see whether it indeed is something distinct from the principle of utility. And, if it appears to be so, oblige him to define it, and express it under some formula, so distinct as to enable you to comprehend and apply it.

Go yet further, pursues Bentham, and, admitting that there are two independent principles, the principle of utility and some other one, request your antagonist to distinguish and separate them; let him determine the limits within which the principle of utility may be applied, and the point where its authority stops, and where the other principle begins to act; in other words, lead him to establish, rationally, the bounds to the operation of these two principles respectively, and to prove that the limits which he assigns them are the just and proper limits.

But once more, says Bentham, suppose that the opponent of your system does define his principle, and does fix the limits to its lawful control, and to that of utility, it still remains to be asked whether its assumed jurisdiction is a real one, and whether this principle, distinct from that of utility, does really possess this pretended authority. Urge, then, the advocate of this principle to point out the peculiar influence of this principle over human nature, and beg him to show how it may be exerted; for the mere imagination of a principle, and the assertion that it is a motive of human volition, will not suffice to give it real power and control; it must actually possess

and exercise this sway over us, or it is but a chimerical principle. Whoever believes in the existence of a motive distinct from utility, is bound, therefore, to show that this motive is one which has the power of exerting a determining influence over the human will.

Bentham supposes that no opponent of the principle of utility can resist such arguments as these; if he escapes one of these snares, he must inevitably, according to him, fall into some other.

In looking over the works of Bentham, I have found, in addition to this plan of attack upon the opponents of his principle, only two other arguments against them. And, in order that you may have a distinct and complete idea of all that he has said in the controversial part of his writings, I will now exhibit these to you.

A law, according to Bentham, must be something exterior to the subject of the law. Utility is thus exterior to the individuals controlled by it, and is made up of material facts, which can be easily estimated, and which, as they result visibly from our actions, can neither be disputed nor denied. Utility, therefore, is an exterior thing, that can, in every case, be calculated with entire certainty, and that can, consequently, be imposed as a law. On the contrary, says Bentham to his opponent, the motive by which you pretend to judge of the good and evil of actions, being an inward phenomenon, cannot be considered as a law, either for the being who experiences the sentiment, or, for a much stronger reason, for him who experiences a different sentiment, or

none at all. In a word, it cannot be, in any sense, a rule.

His second argument is as follows: If you admit the principle of antipathy and sympathy, you must adopt the conclusion, that the legislator should measure his penalties by the degree of repugnance which actions awaken, that is, by the instinctive disapprobation which they excite. But experience proves that legislators have never followed such a rule, and good sense commends their conduct; for to do so would lead to the grossest absurdities in legislation.

And here ends the list of Bentham's arguments against the opponents of his principle. It becomes, now, our duty to take them up successively, and to show how powerless they are against the systems they attack. But, first, let me draw your attention to a great confusion of ideas into which a mind, so little philosophical as Bentham's, has easily fallen; I must carefully remove it in advance, or my replies to his arguments would be complicated and obscure.

It is the more important that this confusion should be pointed out, because it has been employed by many partisans of the system of utility, as a means of escape from those consequences of their opinions which are most repugnant to common sense. Some, like Bentham, have fallen into it instinctively and unawares; others have been conscious of it, and have endeavored to justify it; while it was Hobbes's distinction, that he saw it, and refused to avail himself of its aid.

This confusion consists in substituting the rule of general interest for that of personal interest, of the utility of the whole for private utility, — as if these rules were identical, — as if the former was merely a different mode of expressing the latter, — and as if it was derived, naturally and legitimately, from the fundamental principle of self-love.

It is undeniable, as has fully appeared, from the exposition which I have given of his system, that Bentham did thus substitute one rule for the other. As you will remember, he proceeds, after having laid down his principle, to establish some modes of valuation for the moral worth of actions; to discuss the question whether it is proper to consider certain acts as crimes, and to subject the agent to penalties; to examine the different sanctions for law, which legislators can employ, and the limits to be observed in using them; and, in all his reasonings on these points, he regards no longer individual interest, but general interest; the former he wholly loses sight of; the latter alone occupies his attention; it is by a reference to their effects upon society that he teaches us to judge of actions, and to determine their worth; it is from the consideration of their influence upon society that he establishes the propriety of penal laws; and it is from a view of this influence that he defines the due limits of legal restraints. One who should read this portion of his writings only, would suppose it to be his principle, that the motive of choice, the end of action, and the rule for conduct, should be the pleasure, happiness, and welfare of our fellow-beings; for the ideas of personal pleasure, happiness, and

welfare, wholly disappear; they are not even mentioned.

Equally undeniable is it, that Bentham was quite unconscious of thus substituting one rule for the other. Had he perceived at all that he was doing so,—had he once thought of the difference in the mode of expression, even, between the phrases *private interest* and *general interest*,—he would have been struck with it, and would have felt bound to remove any doubt from the minds of his followers, and to have established the identity of the two rules, and their equal affinity with his fundamental maxim, that pleasure and pain control the acts of man. There is not a trace, however, of any such consciousness in the writings of Bentham; for the use of the word *utility* completely disguised from him the transformation which his ideas had undergone, and the mere difference of expression did not attract his regard.

Bentham, then, actually made this substitution, and he did it quite unconsciously. Let us inquire, now, whether he was justified in so doing. And, to determine this point, let us, in the first place, ascertain more precisely the nature of this substitution, and, then, judge how far it is compatible with the principles of the selfish system.

What do we really mean, when we propose, as the rule for conduct, individual utility? We mean, unquestionably, that it is right and proper to do whatever will give *us* the greatest amount of pleasure, and save *us* most from pain. Now, what do we mean,

on the other hand, when we propose, as a rule, general utility? We mean, that it is right and proper for us to do, in all cases, what will be productive of the greatest amount of good, not only to those immediately connected with us, but to the community of which we are members, and to the human race at large. Such is the true import of these two rules respectively; and to substitute general for private utility, is to establish one of these rules in place of the other.

What, now, is the fundamental idea of the selfish system? Bentham exhibits it in the very first passage of his work, in saying, that pleasure and pain govern the acts of men; and he explains his meaning yet more clearly, by adding, that man can be acted upon by nothing but pleasure and pain; that pleasure and pain are the sole motives of choice; that the only quality by which acts or objects can be estimated, is their property of producing pleasure or pain; that, in every other light, they are indifferent to us;—and thus, in fine, that the prospect of pleasure or pain must always determine our judgments. The fundamental hypothesis of the selfish system, admitted and professed, as it has been, in similar terms, by Epicurus, Hobbes, Helvetius, and all advocates of the system, without exception, could not be more clearly expressed.

It remains to be seen, whether this hypothesis, which is the essential element of the selfish system, is as much in harmony with the rule of general interest, as it is with that of personal interest;



whether, in other words, it justifies, and makes legitimate, one equally with the other. For myself, I assert that it does not.

When we assume, as Bentham has done, the principle, that pain and pleasure govern mankind, and that man is, and can be, influenced by nothing but pleasure and pain, of what kind of pleasures and pains are we understood to speak? Evidently, sensible pains or pleasures. Now, what, for any individual, are sensible pleasures or pains? Evidently, they must be those which he himself experiences, and not those which others experience; for he does not feel these latter, and, not feeling, cannot be influenced by them. If it is true, then, that the only thing which acts upon men is pleasure and pain, it is equally true, that the action of pleasure and pain upon the individual is limited to such as he personally experiences; for, to repeat what was just said, the pleasures and pains of other individuals are not his, and, consequently, have, for him, no existence. What, then, is the legitimate conclusion of Bentham's principle, that pleasure and pain govern mankind? Certainly, that each individual is impelled to act solely by his personal pleasures and pains; or, to say it all in a word, that the end to be pursued by every one is his own greatest pleasure, utility, and private interest. Thus, utility, interest, pleasure, personal well-being, is the rule, and the only rule for conduct, to be drawn from the principle that sensation is the sole motive of volition. Now, nothing can be more widely separated than this rule and that of the general interest. For what does the law of

general interest prescribe? It commands the individual to act with reference, not to his own private good, but to the greatest good of society and of mankind; or, in other words, it sets before him as his end, not his own peculiar interest and utility, but the sum total of human interests; the interests of all men must he labor to increase, and for their utility is he bound to exert his energies. Such an end is good, and I cannot but approve it; reason easily forms the conception, and my idea of it is perfectly clear. But if pleasure and pain are the only motives to action, how shall I be impelled to devote my energies to this end? If it be replied that I should thus act, either because I suffer, through sympathy, with the pains, and rejoice, through sympathy, with the pleasures, of my fellow-beings, or because, by respecting and laboring for the interest of others, I lead them to respect and labor for mine, and that thus, when the matter is well considered, I am calculating wisely for my own good, — then I answer, that, according to either explanation, I am acting, not for the general good, but for my own private good; so that the end to be sought is not changed, for this still remains my own good; and neither is the motive changed, for it continues, as before, to be the love of my own good; the general interest, then, is only a means to this end, and an instrument for this motive; the pretended rule, therefore, of the general interest, is a false one, and individual utility alone, is left as the only true rule for action. Nothing can be plainer than that this is true; for, according to the first of these explanations of the rule of general

utility, if I feel that the pleasure of possessing another's good is greater than the pain of sympathy in seeing him deprived of it, I have, then, a right to rob him; and, according to the second explanation, I have the same right, whenever I find it more profitable, on the whole, to violate than to respect his claims. Singular rule of general utility, indeed, that thus authorizes me to steal! And let no one say, in reply, that, by stealing, I shall injure my true interest, and thus disregard the consideration presented by the second mode of explanation; for on what ground, I ask, if I am influenced by nothing but pleasure, shall I prefer your manner of understanding your interest, which I do not comprehend, to my manner of understanding my interest, which I do comprehend? And, even granting that I see how my private interests are always included in the general interests, and how, by promoting these, I secure my own, yet it still remains true, that I regard the former only as a means of advancing the latter; and how, then, is the general interest a rule for me? So far, then, from showing, that the doctrine of pain and pleasure, as the only motive for choice, justifies the substitution of the law of general utility for that of personal utility, both explanations fully prove that such a substitution is impossible; and, as no third mode of justifying such a substitution has ever been offered, it seems to be clearly demonstrated, that the rule of general utility is not a consequence of the principle of self-love, and cannot be deduced from it. The only rule for conduct, which the principle of self-love can give, is that of private interest,

and every philosopher of the selfish school has been reduced to the narrow alternative either of confining himself to this rule, or of removing the fundamental principle of selfishness, that is to say, of giving up his system altogether.

Such, gentlemen, is the distinction which I have felt bound clearly to point out, before proceeding to answer the arguments of Bentham; for, had I not done so, I should, in consequence of the confusion of his ideas, and of his continual, though unconscious substitution of a rule, which is not to be derived from his principle, for that which does necessarily proceed from it, have been called upon to discuss two different systems at the same time, instead of one. Here, then, we have Bentham simplified; I have a right to reduce him to this single rule of personal interest; and I know well with whom I have to do.

You must not think, gentlemen, that I am treating Bentham with injustice, or misinterpreting his design, by reducing him to this rule. Independently of his fundamental principle, from which it is necessarily derived, I may bring proofs of his opinions from his description of the several virtues and of the social affections, all of which he explains by the interest, not of society, but of the individual. Ask Bentham, for instance, why we should speak the truth. He will answer, Because you thus secure confidence. Or, why should one be honest? To gain credit; and he adds, that we must have invented this means for making a fortune, if it had not naturally existed. Why should we be benevolent? Because others will

then be kind and obliging to us. Ask him again, for what reason it is right to avoid the commission of crimes in secret. He will reply, that there is danger of contracting bad habits, which will, sooner or later, betray themselves; and that the efforts to keep our acts unknown, will cause constant inquietude. Once more; how does he explain the pleasure of being loved? Our pleasure, according to him, arises from the prospect of the spontaneous and gratuitous services which we anticipate receiving from those who love us. What is the pleasure of possessing power? It is the feeling, that we can procure the aid of our fellow-beings, either through fear of the evil, or hope of the good, which we can render. Lastly, what is the pleasure of piety? Bentham declares that it is the expectation of the favor of God in this life and another. Hence you see that Bentham has fully comprehended the true motive which should lead the lover of self to respect general utility, and that, in the detail, he is as strict as Hobbes, in following out the consequence of his principle, although much less consistent in his theory. Let me mention one more of his opinions, from which you will be enabled fully to understand his ideas upon this subject. Why should a man keep his promise? Because, says Bentham, it is useful to do so. He may break a promise, then, if it would injure him to observe it? Certainly, he replies. I have not, then, done Bentham the least injustice, in reducing him to the rule of personal interest; and it is on this ground, therefore, that I meet him to discuss the validity of his arguments.

And, in the first place, gentlemen, it is an undeniable fact, which I have no desire of disputing, that every one does admit, as Bentham asserts, that the motive of utility is one among those which determine human action. This motive, undoubtedly, controls many of our volitions, and, consequently, many of our acts. Now, the question to be decided is, whether this is the *only* motive of choice, or whether others are also active in human nature. In other words, we are to inquire whether we do distinguish between actions only by an anticipation of their beneficial or injurious consequences, or whether, on the contrary, we have also some other tests by which we judge.

If I, then, was the adversary whom Bentham was trying to convert, and he should ask me to examine this other motive, seemingly so different from that of utility, already admitted by me to be active, and to see whether it was not really this principle of utility in disguise,—I should reply, that I was perfectly convinced it was not, and that the reason for my conviction was the fact, that the characteristics of the two principles were not only very dissimilar, but altogether opposite. For what is the meaning of *utility*? It means something that is good for me, agreeable to me. Whenever I judge and act, then, on the ground of utility, I do so from a personal motive. It is from a consideration of the influence of the action upon myself—an influence which is good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable for myself—that I judge of its expediency, and determine upon its performance. The motive of judgment and ac-

tion is personal, therefore, when I determine upon a course of conduct, because it is useful. Now, nothing can be more unlike such a principle as this, than the other principle, which I also recognize, and which I have called the principle of order. When I determine upon an act, under the influence of this principle of order, I do so, not because it is good for me, but because it is good in itself; not because it is agreeable to me, but because it is proper in itself. Acting from this principle of order, then, and regarding actions not in their relations to me, but to something different from me,—that is to say, order,—I am impelled, not by a personal, but by an impersonal motive. Not only, therefore, is this other principle recognized by me, as not the principle of utility in disguise, but nothing can be imagined more entirely unlike and opposed to it; because, in the first place, its characteristics are completely opposite to those of the principle of utility; because, secondly, the volitions which I form under the influence of this principle, differ from those which result from the influence of utility; and, thirdly, because it is the effect of the act upon myself which I regard in the one case, while, in the other, I look only to the nature of the act in itself, independently of its effect. No two things, therefore, can be, I will not say more distinct, but more entirely contrary to each other, than the principle of utility and the moral principle.

I admit, then, all that Bentham wishes me to admit; I recognize, in the first place, a principle which is distinct from utility, and which is not utility in

disguise; and I recognize, in the second place, that this principle does not, in its estimate of actions, judge of them by a view of their agreeable or disagreeable consequences, but by a quite different test.

And now let us go a step further, and ask whether it is true, as Bentham asserts, that such a principle must either be despotic or anarchical. This I entirely deny, and maintain that the only principle which really is subject to this alternative, is the principle of utility itself.

And, to enable you to judge of the correctness of this assertion, consider, for a moment, the arguments adduced by Bentham in favor of his opinion. Bentham says that, as the consequences of actions upon the well-being of an individual are material, visible, and palpable facts, it is impossible that men should disagree as to the good or evil nature of these consequences. This I may readily grant; I may admit that a jury of unprejudiced and unbiased men, assembled to consider whether a certain act will be productive to an individual of more or less pain than pleasure, would probably agree in their opinion; but I assert that to put the question, as to the tendency of the two principles, in this way, is entirely to misstate it; and, therefore, that the argument drawn by Bentham from the unanimity of the jury, does nothing whatever to prove the point which he pretends to establish.

For what is the fair conclusion to be drawn from the unanimity of the answer? Simply this; that, when the selfish definition of good is admitted, men



may easily agree as to what will be for the good of any particular individual.

But if, on the other hand, still defining good in the same way, different individuals should be led to consider, as good for themselves, objects and acts which are quite opposite and unlike, would there not then arise quite as much strife, and consequently anarchy, as there had before been accordance ?

That, with the selfish definition of good before them, a jury might agree as to what would benefit a certain individual, I readily admit. But if, with the same definition of good, this jury should equally agree that what was good for this individual was bad for another, its unanimity would then only serve to prove that the good of the first was the evil of the second, and that what one has the right to do, the other has the right to prevent him from doing; from which it would appear that the selfish definition of good leads directly to anarchy.

Bentham misstates, therefore, the question, and his argument is a sophism. The true question is this: "Does the selfish principle—or, what amounts to the same thing, does the definition that it gives of good—tend to divide or to unite individuals?" Thus put, the question receives, from both reason and experience, an answer exactly contrary to that which Bentham has seen fit to give.

If good for myself and for every other person is the greatest amount of pleasure which I or they can enjoy,—and if, consequently, each has the right to do whatever will conduce to this end,—is it not evident, unless I always find that most for my pleasure

which others do for theirs, and unless they always find that most for their pleasure which I do for mine, that we shall be brought into conflict, division, and anarchy? Thus says reason. And what is the lesson of experience? Experience declares that, in a vast number of instances, what seems useful to one is judged to be injurious by another, and that the very same act has a wholly different, and often altogether an opposite, influence upon the interests of individuals; so that, should every individual do, in all cases, just what seemed most advantageous to himself, without regarding any other considerations, society would be in a constant state of anarchy. Experience declares that the cause of the strifes which disturb society, and which would wholly overthrow it, were it not for the restraints of law, is the fact, that so many individuals do give themselves wholly up to the pursuit of their own private interests; and she adds, that this same principle introduces strife between nations as it does between individuals, and thus scatters through the whole human race the same anarchy that it produces in separate communities, unless its action is checked; so that, to profess the legitimacy of individual pursuit of interests, and to assert that whoever seeks his own private good does right, is to proclaim the principle of universal anarchy at once. Such are the dictates of reason and experience, and, as you plainly see, they nowise accord with the opinions of Bentham.

Suppose, now, that you dislike this anarchy, and that you desire to repress or prevent this conflict among individual interests;—I ask in what manner,

according to the selfish system, you would proceed. Good being altogether an individual thing, you can set up and establish no law but that of personal well-being; and the interests of different individuals being at the same time opposed, and yet equally legitimate, the law cannot be executed without trampling under foot the interests of some individual or other, which interests are nevertheless legitimate; that is to say, the final result of anarchy, according to the selfish system, is the forcible triumph of one particular interest over all other interests in the community. Now, what is such a triumph as this except a despotism? Here, again, experience entirely confirms the results which we arrive at by reasoning. For what other origin does she assign to despotism, or what other nature does she recognize in it, than these which I have just described — namely, that the interests of one or of a few have triumphed over and trampled down the interests of all others? According, therefore, to the judgments of universal common sense, self-love, or the selfish principle, is the source of all anarchy and despotism. What would become of the world if it was governed exclusively by selfishness?

I well know — and I have already fully admitted it in my remarks upon the system of Hobbes — that there are so many and such active social principles coöperating to produce individual happiness, as to render wholly impossible the state of war which this philosopher has supposed natural. But observe, gentlemen, this is wholly owing to the fact that man is constituted as he now is, and not as the selfish system

supposes him to be. For how happens it, that a man, pursuing his own good, according to the principle of interest well understood, acts with justice and kindness to his fellow-men, and follows in his conduct the rules of social love and charity? It is because, in human beings, such as we find them, other principles beside self-love are active; because man has the conception of order, and loves it, and has an inward enjoyment when he feels in his soul the sentiment of it, and acts in accordance with it, and, on the contrary, an insupportable pain when he opposes it; because the social and benevolent instincts are perfectly in harmony with order, and receive from this correspondence a peculiar force and sweetness, which give to their gratification a greater power of producing happiness than any merely selfish instinct can possess. If we suppose men to continue as they now are, the pursuit of personal well-being will not necessarily bring them into conflict; on the contrary, it allows of union and concert, and therefore have I asserted that Hobbes could not legitimately conclude, from his principle, that the state of war was the state of nature, except by mutilating the element of pleasure. But if, on the contrary, we conceive of human beings under the selfish point of view, and admit it to be true that they are acted upon by nothing except pleasure and pain, then, with the natural authority of order, disappear at once all pleasures and pains which the sentiment of order produces, and all the energy which it communicates to the action of the benevolent affections; the balance and harmony of the faculties is destroyed; the selfish impulses subdue

\* The argument of Jouffroy, which he himself here alluded to, is on the contrary, designed to prove an inconsistency of Hobbes's system with itself, even allowing Hobbes principle of utility.

the social impulses ; the pursuit of interest well understood leads to entirely different results, because the elements of good itself are changed ; and Hobbes may then with truth declare, that anarchy and war are the state of nature. Hence we see, that, though Hobbes has been false to human nature, in proclaiming that anarchy or despotism is the natural alternative which results from the pursuit of individual interest, yet has he been perfectly logical in declaring that this is the strict consequence of the selfish principle. Hobbes, willing as he was to reason, and to follow out the tendency of his principle — Hobbes, who had nothing of Bentham's contempt for discussion — saw distinctly the end to which the principle of self-love leads, and the narrow alternative to which it reduces mankind ; while Bentham, so far from being aware of it, brings this charge, to which the selfish principle alone is liable, against systems which declare the existence and action of an impersonal motive, and which, consequently, cannot deserve the reproach.

Consider, now, for a moment, the test which the moral principle applies to conduct, and see, gentlemen, whether it is not precisely what we need to save the world and human society from the terrible alternative which Bentham has seen fit to attribute to its influence. Bentham declares that the moral judgment of actions must be obscure and uncertain ; but nothing, in truth, can be simpler or more clear.

Suppose, for instance, that we see a mother and child ; will any one say that these two beings have no connection with each other, and that, independently of, and prior to all human judgments, there

are no relations between them, which reason did not invent and cannot destroy, but sees to be already existing? No one would deny that they do sustain such relations. From the mere fact that one of these beings is a mother and the other a child, they are united together by a tie which is peculiar, *sui generis*, and distinct from all other human relations. I ask, now, a second question. Do there not result from this peculiar relation, as a necessary consequence, feelings and acts which are proper and suitable between these two beings? In other words, I ask whether, from the fact that one of them is the mother, it does not seem right, in the view of reason, that she should take care of her child, satisfy its wants, protect its weakness, supply the defects of its intelligence, and under no pretext whatever abandon it; and whether, again, from the fact that the other being is the child, it does not seem equally proper and right, that, as soon as it is able to comprehend its relation, it should manifest gratitude and respect towards its mother, and serve and protect her, and never desert her in her old age. Can there be even a shadow of doubt upon this point? Can a human being be found, who would hesitate to approve this conduct upon both sides, and to disapprove of the opposite? And not only so, but also to command the first as a duty, and to forbid the second as a crime? Thus, from the nature of this relation, which unites the child to the mother, and the mother to the child, arises a distinct conception of the treatment which is proper and right, from one towards the other; and this conception arises wholly, you

will observe, from the idea of this relation; for it is independent of all other considerations. The nature of the conduct, which is on both sides becoming, is nowise altered by the disagreeable qualities of the child in its youth, or of the parent in its age. However much the mother may love pleasure and repose; however much the care of her child may cause trouble and sacrifice; and, on the other hand, whatever the considerations of interest which may lead the child to regret the necessity of protecting and sustaining the declining years of its parent,—the relation and its appropriate duties remain unchanged, and the very beings most interested judge of them as an unconcerned beholder would. This is precisely because this judgment is based, not upon the prospect of the utility of right conduct to either being, but upon a conception of the eternal order of things; therefore it is, that it pronounces this conduct good in itself; and it is because this goodness is absolute and universal for all beings, that it declares it to be obligatory, and a duty. If, then, I should be asked whence I derive my estimate of the moral quality of actions, my answer may be readily inferred from this example. I derive it from the nature of things, from the eternal order established by the Creator; and it only needs that a being should be reasonable, to conceive of this order, and comprehend what acts are becoming and proper in all the relations of life. For instance, I bring to the test of this moral principle two men, who are both desirous to increase their property at each other's expense; and by the authority, and in the name of absolute good, I pass

a judgment upon their rival pretensions, which would meet with the approbation of every rational being, and to which they cannot refuse to listen. They may find this decision contrary, indeed, to their interests, and with reason, because interest is personal, and private good is far removed from absolute good; it is very possible, too, that they may reject it, and prefer what is profitable to what is right; but even while doing so, they will be obliged to recognize its justice, and respect its truth; and reason will compel them to acknowledge that it does express and declare that which is absolutely right, and which ought to be done.

Whence, now, gentlemen, comes the universal respect for decisions drawn from the moral principle, even in the minds of those whose interests it may injure? From the single fact that this principle is impersonal, and passes judgment, not with reference to what is agreeable to you and to me, but to what is right in itself and in the nature of things. Now, as the nature of things is permanent, and of a character to be recognized by all rational beings, the actions upon which judgment is passed in reference to this standard must be equally manifest to all; and, as the mode of judging is universally approved, and the conduct conformable to these judgments is universally obligatory, the rules thence resulting may be imposed upon all as duties; while, on the contrary, when acts are judged of by the test of personal interest, there will be as many different estimates as there are individuals, each individual approving only what is agreeable to himself, and finding



every thing else odious and detestable. The estimate of acts, then, by the rule of utility, is necessarily anarchical, and can be enforced practically only through despotism. In so far, therefore, as mankind do escape this alternative, between anarchy and despotism, it must be owing to the existence of a mode of judging conduct, which, as it is based upon something permanent and universally recognized, conducts all reasonable beings to uniform judgments, and which, as it is approved as good in itself, is admitted to be right, and is respected even by those whose interests it injures, and who refuse to be bound by its decisions. Whether it is a king or beggar, who declares, "Thou shalt not steal," the command neither gains nor loses its authority; the robber and the robbed alike acknowledge its justice. All men, then, are morally united by this principle, and acknowledge that they are legitimately subject to its sway.

I have thus repelled, altogether, as you see, the charge of producing anarchy or despotism, brought by Bentham, against what he calls the principle of sympathy and antipathy, and have clearly shown that it applies to his own principle of utility.

Bentham has further inquired, whether this principle is a blind instinct, or a rule to be definitely expressed, and rationally applied, in the estimate of actions. The developments into which I have already entered answer this question at once. Unquestionably, the laws of order are something perceptible to reason; and when we act in obedience to these laws, we do so intelligently, and not from instinct. I only remark further, that it is true in

relation to these laws, as to every province of human intelligence, that different minds will recognize them with different degrees of distinctness, and, consequently, will form of them a more or less complete and perfect idea. Practical men, who cannot conceive of shades of distinctness in the ideas of men, will not, of course, admit these differences, and, not admitting, will not trouble themselves about them. That human minds should be full of such shades and differences, and that it is precisely these which distinguish individuals, is a matter of little moment to them; these are facts which they overlook, and of which their philosophy takes no heed. These differences do exist, however; and though not for the sake of practical men, yet for yours, gentlemen, who are capable of comprehending them, let me here remark, that intelligence, and, consequently, conscience, is developed very unequally in different men, and that these differences are innumerable. There are those in whom the perception of order is so indistinct, that it resembles a sentiment more than an idea; and the estimates and volitions resulting from it seem more like the effects of instinct than the consequences of a judgment. This it is which has led some philosophers to consider human conscience as a sense, that perceives the moral good or ill of actions, as taste and smell perceive flavors and odors. In truth, judgments, arising from a sentiment, do closely resemble those which result from a confused idea; and it is under this indistinct form that the laws of order are recognized by those in whose minds intellect is but imperfectly developed;

that is to say, by the greatest portion of mankind. Moral ideas, therefore, are subject to the same law with all our other ideas; they begin in indistinctness and confusion, and, in most minds, always remain in this state; and, it is while thus indistinct, that they exercise the most influence, for then are they poetical: the poet presents his ideas under indefinite forms; the moment he expresses them clearly and distinctly, he becomes a philosopher, as I have so often explained. These confused views of order, however, may become more and more precise, in infinite degrees, in proportion as individuals receive from education, and from the experience of life, a more complete culture of their powers; so that, in certain minds, they may finally be transformed into perfectly bright conceptions. Between moral ideas, as they exist in the consciences of the majority of men, and in such a mind as Kant's, when he was writing his work on the principles of ethics, and the rules of duty, there may be innumerable shades of clearness. Often do we see men in whose minds portions of the laws of order are perfectly distinct, while others still remain confused; and this is owing to the fact, that particular circumstances of their lives have led them to reflect upon parts of the moral law, while upon others they have never had occasion seriously to reflect. Such men judge of the moral worth of certain acts in a perfectly reasonable way, while, in their estimates of others, they are guided merely by sentiment, like other men. This example will suffice to show how ideas of the moral law may be developed unequally in dif-

ferent minds, and how they may become entirely distinct in the few. But no single human being is wholly destitute of them; for they exist even where they are most confused and obscure. It is the effect of a good education to develop the reason, by removing from our moral ideas the shades of indistinctness which first enshroud them, and which the experience of life rarely clears away, unless reflection, early directed to their contemplation and study, is prepared to receive their teachings.

My answer, then, to Bentham, is, that the moral principle is not an instinct, but the combined truths which are perceptible to reason, and of which all men have a view more or less distinct; but that, even when this view is confused, it still exerts an influence, as universal experience attests, and is sufficiently active, as experience also proves, to make those in whom it is found responsible. This responsibility is weakened only, not destroyed, in those in whom the idea of order is obscure; while its full obligations rest upon all in whom the view of these laws is clear.

Once more, Bentham requires, that, if we are obstinately bent upon admitting another principle beside that of utility, we should define the limits of these several principles, and explain the reason why the authority of one should cease at a certain point, and the influence of the other there begin. He requires, in a word, that we should mark the bounds for the action of each principle, and our reasons for so doing.

Nothing is easier than to give this explanation,

and thus escape from the difficulty. It hardly needs, indeed, to be explained. Which of the two should we do — what is right in itself, or what is to us agreeable? This is the question; and, I ask you, gentlemen, should you have a moment's hesitation in replying? Would you not at once tell me that it was better to do what is right than what is agreeable? Bentham's question, then, is answered. Without a doubt, good or absolute right is a higher rule of action than relative good or private utility. Whenever, then, these two rules come in collision, personal well-being is to be sacrificed — so says reason in the mind of every human being; and it decides thus, because it perceives that one of these goods, being absolute, has in itself an obligatory and sacred character, while the other has no such character in itself, and cannot have, except through its conformity with what is absolutely good. It is perfectly easy, then, to mark the limit so imperiously demanded by Bentham; one principle is lawful — the principle of good in itself; the principle of personal good, on the other hand, is neither lawful nor unlawful; its demands and requisitions assume this character only in so far as they are more or less conformed to the rule of absolute good. This is the simple truth as we find it in our nature. And again I repeat what I have so often said before, that I have no wish to do injustice to the motive of personal interest; for it exists in us — it is a part of our nature — and therefore is it good. The instinctive tendencies of our nature are also good; but this nowise prevents personal interest, which is only these natural impulses made intelligent and rea-

sonable, from being a better principle of conduct. Why, then, should not the view of absolute good have a like superiority over that of personal good?—and who can deny that it has? Instinct, self-love, morality—these are the three stages by which a human being rises from the condition of the brute to that of the angel; and to destroy either of them is to forget the lowness of its origin, and the loftiness of its destiny; in other words, it is to mutilate, on one side or the other, the history of its development. And these three states are but three phases of one and the same development. As interest is only instinct understood and comprehended by reason, so, from an elevated point of view, we might say that morality is only self-love understood and comprehended; for, if the sentiment of our being in harmony and coöperation with universal order is the happiest that our nature can experience, is it not a sure indication that the true vocation, and unseen, though final end, to which its impulses and its self-love unconsciously conspire, is to unite with universal order without losing itself; or, in other words, to coöperate intelligently, according to the measure of its power, with the grand end of the universe? But, however this may be, the limit demanded by Bentham is still easily fixed; for, if there should be collision between the principle of self-love and the moral principle, we know which should lawfully rule. Regarded from an elevated point of view, such a collision must be rare; and, when the true relations of things are fully understood, there never can be any.

Once more, Bentham asks us to examine, whether

the principle which we suppose to be acting, in addition to the principle of utility, has, really, any power over human nature, and does, really, exert an influence in our acts of will. This, gentlemen, is a subject for simple observation. The question is, whether a view of actions, as conformable or contrary to order, as good or evil in themselves, does, or does not, exert an influence over the mind, which conceives it; and it is a question for experience to decide. It is certain, that, for men, constantly pre-occupied with their own interests, and accustomed from the effects of education and the influence of their occupations, to regard all acts in reference to these interests, the influence of the moral motive will be so slightly apparent, that many might be disposed entirely to deny its action; and, in fact, among such men, the selfish motive does triumph over and impede the action of the moral principle. But, without taking into consideration men, who, on the contrary, are governed habitually by the moral motive, I assert, that, even among those who are usually governed by motives of self-interest, the moral motive does exist, and that, in many cases, it does modify, and sometimes even wholly control, the action of self-love. We must have observed men very superficially, and gained but a slight knowledge of their nature, not to perceive how often, in the lives of those who seem exclusively devoted to the pursuit of private interest, there are partial sacrifices to considerations of absolute good. Could we have spread out before us the inward experience of any individual, selected at random, from those working and mercan-

tile classes, of whom so much evil is spoken, we should be confounded at the many acts of probity, the generous purposes, and generous deeds too, which it would exhibit; and I mean purposes and deeds of conscious generosity, for I would not confound with truly disinterested acts those which are so only in appearance, and which are, in truth, concessions made for the sake of gaining reputation, or from fear of public opinion. But, let us ask, whence comes this very public opinion, and the necessity for respecting it, if self-love alone controls the purposes and acts of men. They never have studied human nature with any degree of profoundness, who admit the thought, that a man could be found at court, in shops, or even in prison cells, over whom the idea of order, and the considerations of what is just and right, have never exerted any influence. Such a man never has existed, and never could exist; for human nature is uniform; its elements are all found in every individual; and, however repressed and mutilated, there still is not one which does not retain some measure of activity, and exert some degree of influence over all spirits.

Suppose, now, that it should be further asked, why the view of an action, as conformable to reason, should control our will; and the question may be met by asking, in turn, why should the prospect of useful consequences influence us. Whatever answer may be given to this question, and however much its meaning may be veiled in obscure phraseology, still it must amount merely to this — that it is human nature to be thus influenced. I am impelled to pursue pleasure because I love it, and



I love it because I am so constituted ; and thus it is, because I naturally respect order, that I am impelled to act in conformity with it ; and it is because I am so constituted that I do respect it. Between my reason and order there is a like affinity, as exists between my sensitive nature and pleasure ; and these two affinities are both, and in an equal degree, facts, which, though we may comment upon, we cannot explain ; for they are ultimate, and cannot be resolved into any thing more simple. It is quite as inexplicable that pleasure should act upon my sensibility, as that order should have any influence over my reason. And if it should be asserted, as it has been by many philosophers, that sensibility may influence the will, but that reason cannot, I answer that this is untrue in point of fact ; but even if it was true, ~~(that)~~<sup>\*</sup> self-interest, being a calculation of reason, could no more exert an influence on the will, than the idea of order : it is plain, however, that self-interest does act so strongly upon the will, as to triumph frequently over the passions, which are simply sensitive impulses. If, finally, it should be objected, that self-love is strengthened in its controlling power over our volitions by the general desire of happiness, which is a sensible fact, I answer, that the contemplation of order derives equal energy from that love of order and of beauty, which is also a sensible fact. In whatever light we may regard the subject, we shall find that it is impossible, by any mode of reasoning, which has the least appearance of common sense, to avoid the undeniable fact, that the moral motive, or the view of absolute good, has power to influence the will. Bentham's objection, therefore, has no force.

\* for "that", read "there" -

Finally, Bentham argues that interest, being an external motive, may become a law ; while all other motives, being internal, are incapable of assuming such a character. And here Bentham's profound psychological ignorance fully displays itself; his statement is exactly the contrary of truth. Interest is a personal motive ; order, an impersonal one : which, now, of two such motives, should be called external, and which internal — the personal, or the impersonal ? Which, naturally, wears the authority of a law ? What do I obey when I follow interest ? Myself. What do I obey when I respect order ? Something different from, and superior to, myself, which controls all other individuals, as it does me. In which motive, then, I ask again, do we behold the distinctive characteristic of being external, and all other characteristics which are necessary to constitute a law ? Bentham is, indeed, singularly unfortunate in this argument ; his objections would fully reveal, if this were at all necessary, the weakness and defects of his whole system, because they have no force whatever, except when directed against this system : the moral system they cannot affect, for they leave it wholly untouched.

I come now, gentlemen, to the last argument which Bentham brings against the moral motive. He asserts, that, if we recognize this motive, we shall be obliged, in legislation, to proportion all penalties to the degree of disapprobation which we feel towards certain acts — an idea that never yet entered, as he thinks, the head of any legislator. To this I reply, that the consequence does not follow from the principle. Suppose that I disapprove a certain act more strongly than I do

some other ; or, in other words, that in my judgment it appears to me more opposed to the rule of order, what follows? Simply this — that the agent in the one case will seem to me more culpable, that is to say, more deserving of punishment, than in the other. But because one merits a severer punishment, than the other, it by no means follows, that society should inflict it, and for the simple reason that it is not the mission of society to punish guilt and reward virtue; this is the prerogative of God, and of conscience; in its reverence and fear of God, conscience does indeed execute retributive justice; within ourselves and by ourselves are our acts really punished and rewarded; and compared with these joys and torments, which conscience administers, outward pains and pleasures are but trifles. It is not, then, with the view of just retribution, that society in a few, and but a very few cases, inflicts penalties; but it is governed in so doing by the totally different principle of a regard for its own well-being, and with a view of self-preservation simply. For this reason it is that it punishes only the single class of crimes which threaten its own peace; all others it leaves to God; and here, too, we see the reason why it so seldom bestows rewards. The principle of all criminal legislation is the interest of society; and therefore do we find, as we should expect to find, that the laws neither punish every crime, nor do they proportion penalties to the degree of moral demerit in the acts which they condemn. At the same time, however, it must be said, that the moral principle has never been wholly lost sight of, nor forgotten, in the construction of any code of laws; utility alone cannot account for, nor explain, all the provisions

of any system of legislation, however unreasonable. The fact is, society, before proceeding to attach a penalty to the commission of acts which injure its interest, proportioned to this injury, asks a question, never suggested in the system of Bentham; it asks whether it has the moral right to punish; whether, in producing pain in the individual, it does not treat him unjustly; in other words, it inquires whether the individual is really culpable, and whether he is justly liable to the infliction of the penalty. And it is only when satisfied of the justice and equity of its acts that it dares to punish; it will do nothing which retributive justice does not authorize and approve, although acting solely with a view to its own preservation. Thus the moral and the selfish principles unite in the construction of criminal codes, though in unequal degrees; for the former merely restrains and directs the latter, while this, in its action, gives origin to the laws. Thus much it is indispensable we should know, to be enabled to understand penal legislation; it is otherwise inexplicable. Let Bentham explain, if he can, why the criminal code pardons a man who has done society an injury, if it is proved that he was unconscious of the wrong; he cannot explain it except by sophistry; for the reason plainly is, that the man is innocent; but the word *innocence* has no meaning in the system of utility. I might easily produce yet more striking examples. But I will sum up what I have said with the remark, that, unquestionably, penal legislation does not originate in the moral principle, and consequently cannot be explained by it; but it does not follow from this fact, that the moral principle has no existence nor power of ac-

tion; it merely follows, that penal legislation originates in another principle of our nature, which I also recognize and admit—the principle of utility. Penal legislation, however, though not emanating from it, does still manifest the power and influence of the moral principle; for there is not a code which it does not modify and help to form. Here then, once more, and for the last time, observe, that this objection of Bentham establishes the very principle which he wishes to destroy.

This is all, gentlemen, that I have to say of the inconclusiveness of the arguments brought by Bentham against the existence of a principle in our nature distinct from that of utility: you may think, perhaps, that they little merit so long a consideration; and I freely confess, that my reply would have been much more brief, if the system of Bentham had not been so celebrated, and in some respects so worthy of regard.

## LECTURE XV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

FOR the purpose of making you acquainted with the selfish mode of explaining the moral problem, I have selected and described the systems of Hobbes and of Bentham—the two most celebrated among the modern systems, which have adopted and professed the selfish principle. As these two systems, and the observations suggested by them, have sufficed to give you a clear and complete idea of the nature and defects of this theory, I have limited myself to these examples. And yet, gentlemen, you have seen, in the doctrines of Hobbes and of Bentham, only one form of the selfish system, while sometimes it appears under other characters, in which you would scarcely recognize it. I regret, therefore, to be compelled by the plan of this course, which is rather dogmatical than historical, to put an end to my expositions. To supply, however, as far as possible, the necessary void, I have determined to devote the present lecture to a further consideration of the selfish system. My object is twofold: first, I wish, in a more precise manner, to define the essential

element of the selfish system; and, secondly, to describe the various distinctive forms which it has assumed. And, though the subject is a large one, I will endeavor, by the definiteness and precision of my statements, to complete the discussion of it within the narrow limits of a short lecture.

The peculiarity of the selfish system, you will recollect, is, that it misunderstands and suppresses two of the modes of human volition, and preserves only the third. The two modes of volition which it destroys, are the impulsive and the moral. An ethical system which should recognize, that, in certain cases, we seek truth, desire power, aid our fellow-beings, from the simple love of truth, of power, and of our fellow-beings, without regard to self, or the relations between these acts and our own good, would thus prove that it is not a form of the selfish system, because it would thus deny that the pursuit of our own good is the only motive of choice and of action. Again, a system which should assert, that, in certain circumstances, the idea of absolute good acts upon us directly, and determines our conduct, independently of any anticipation of our own good, and even when we are called to make a sacrifice of our own good, would prove, by such a statement, that it was not a form of the selfish system, because it would deny, equally with the former, although in a different way, the fundamental maxim of the selfish theory. The selfish system, then, has this psychological characteristic — that it denies the impulsive and moral modes of volition. It can be main-

tained only by subjecting human nature to this two-fold mutilation.

Besides these two modes of volition, observation offers only one more, which I have called the *selfish* mode. And, as philosophy has no power of inventing what does not exist, a philosopher who misconceives and rejects the two first-named modes, is necessarily compelled to elevate the third into being the sole and universal mode of human volition; for there is not a fourth. But by what consideration are we determined, when we act from the selfish motive? By the prospect of our own personal well-being. Personal interest, then, recognized and proclaimed as the single motive and sole end of all human action — this is the characteristic of the selfish system.

The words *personal well-being*, however, represent a fact in human nature, which is complex, and made up of divers elements. It may readily be conceived, therefore, that, among the philosophers who have recognized personal well-being as the end and motive of action, some may have seen more, others fewer, of these elements; and, again, that the elements observed by them may have been different. And we can well understand that this system should have manifested itself under various forms, in proportion as the analysis of the fact upon which it is founded has been more or less exact. We should ascertain, then, if possible, the number and the nature of these forms; and this is precisely what I wish now to do.

The method to be followed in this inquiry is at



once simple and sure. Philosophy may omit, though it cannot create; it may overlook, though it cannot invent. If philosophers of the selfish school have differed, then, it is owing only to their having found more or fewer elements in the common fact, which they have all considered to be the only mode of human volition. To discover all the diverse forms, therefore, of which the selfish system is susceptible, it is only necessary that we should determine in how many different ways this fact may be mutilated; and to this end we must analyze and disengage its several elements. Let us review, then, gentlemen, our analysis of this fact; let us count its several elements; and thus shall we arrive infallibly at the end we seek.

Our nature is, by its organization, fitted for certain ends, and manifests this fitness by various instinctive tendencies. At first, it sees nothing beyond these ends, to which it feels itself impelled; but, when reason is developed, the truth, before hidden, is revealed; for reason comprehends that these ends are not our real good, but only means to produce it, and that our good itself is the satisfaction of our instincts, and our greatest good the fullest satisfaction of these instincts. Thus, to take a common example, the appetite of hunger impels us instinctively to seek food, which food, we suppose, in the first instance, to be the final end of the appetite itself; but, when we become rational, we comprehend that the true end to which the appetite tends is the feeling of satisfied hunger, and that food is only the means of producing this satisfaction. Henceforth, we consider this gratification our good, and cease to look

for it in the objects which give this gratification. The same may be said of all our other impulses; and thus we ascend by degrees to the idea that our good is the satisfaction of our natural tendencies, our highest good their fullest satisfaction.

But our nature is sensitive, and therefore no passion can be gratified without an agreeable sensation. This agreeable sensation is quite distinct, however, from the gratification. I am hungry; I eat, and experience a pleasant feeling; and why? because my appetite is satisfied. The pleasure, then, is the effect of the satisfaction, and is not that satisfaction itself: even if pleasure was not felt, then, the appetite would still be satisfied, and the good of our nature accomplished. Pleasure is the sensible effect of the good, but is not the good itself: the two ideas are distinct; the two phenomena are different.

Now, unfortunately, these two phenomena are inseparably united, and therefore the ideas are united also; unfortunately, also, one of these facts, being a sensible one,—that is, pleasure,—is easily recognized; whereas the other—that is, good—is less apparent, because contained within the sensible fact. The human mind easily, therefore, confounds these separate facts, and, in the confusion, it is the least apparent which is overlooked and forgotten; hence the mistaking of pleasure for good, and the identifying of these two ideas in the single one of happiness.

In what I have now said, I have explained some of the mutilations of the idea of personal good, and some of the various forms which the selfish system has assumed. Our analysis has exhibited three facts

entirely distinct; first, the satisfaction of our nature, which is our good; secondly, the pleasure accompanying this satisfaction, which is happiness; thirdly, the objects fitted to produce the satisfaction that results in pleasure: these are useful. A selfish system, to be true and complete, must neither overlook these several facts, nor alter their nature, nor modify their functions, nor diminish the importance of any one. And now you can imagine how many ways there are of failing to fulfil these conditions, and of giving, in consequence, an imperfect representation of the selfish system. I have time to indicate only the most important and the most common.

The one most frequently met with is that which confounds the fundamental and secondary elements, and defines good to be *pleasure*. This form of the selfish system may be called the sensual form. It is self-love deprived of its essential principle—the effect of personal good mistaken for the good itself; in a word, it is a monstrous though natural mutilation of the fundamental fact. The practical effect of this doctrine is not only the effeminacy which results from this substitution, but, yet more, the various mistakes resulting from this substitution, which lead the individual astray in the pursuit of his own good. Nothing is more common than to see the pursuit of pleasure terminate in results the most disastrous possible to self-interest; and, notwithstanding the close connection which unites pleasure with good, it is easy to perceive the cause of such an unfortunate result.

Pleasure is a fact so apparent, that it has never

been overlooked by philosophers of the selfish school ; but there are few only who have had the good sense to perceive that pleasure was not itself our good, but only an accessory element of it ; and who have recognized, as the true end for self-love, the satisfaction of the different impulses and faculties of our nature. From this latter view has resulted a form of the selfish system, at once more austere and more nearly true, which may well deserve to be called its *rational* form. In more than one instance, the selfish system, thus conceived, has defined the good of the individual to be that *which is conformable to his nature* — a definition which elevates self-love almost to the rank of morality, and which, as it is better calculated than any other to make the principle an intelligent one, has produced fewer evils in practice. This form of the selfish system, by its superior truth, has resulted in a comparatively elevated theory, and in an enlightened and pure rule for life. Among individuals of weak minds, however, its influence is to create all the miseries of excessive prudence, and all the meannesses of a close calculation of interest ; while the pursuit of pleasure, on the other hand, leaves to its followers greater liberality of ideas, less hardness and dryness of feeling, and more freedom in their mode of action.

I know no philosopher, who has committed the error of mistaking the means of happiness or good for the happiness and good itself, and who has founded upon such an error a system ; but nothing is more common among men at large, and, therefore, this, too, should be classed among the different forms of

the selfish system. It is the delusion of the multitude, who mistake wealth, lands, houses, furniture, for the end really pursued in acquiring them, and who, instead of using them for this end, turn all the energies of their minds to simple accumulation. The error is so truly absurd, common though it is, and its practical effects are so obvious, that it would not be worth our while to describe them.

Such are the three principal forms which the selfish system may assume in the minds of those whose views are narrow and incomplete, and who imperfectly understand the three facts, which I have exhibited to you by analysis. Each of these forms is susceptible of various modifications, according as the leading fact is differently comprehended, and as the influence of other elements enters more or less into the system.

This, however, is not the only source of diverse forms of the selfish system; there is another, equally productive of variety, which I will now proceed to describe.

Our good, gentlemen, is composed, as you will observe, of several particular goods, and so also is our pleasure; the satisfaction of our nature thus resolves itself into the satisfaction of its various impulses and faculties; and to the gratification of each of these belongs a particular pleasure. Now, in his estimate of the elements of good or of happiness, a philosopher may easily be so preoccupied with the idea of a certain class of these, as to misunderstand or wholly neglect all others; he may even go further, and not only misunderstand or neglect them, but systematically

condemn them as injurious to our greatest good and happiness, and never describe them, like other pleasures, as something to be sought. You see, at once, to what various mutilations of good and of happiness, and, consequently, to what new and different forms of selfishness, such views might lead; I will limit myself to the exhibition of but a few.

And first, gentlemen, the instincts of our nature are of two kinds; first, those which can find their satisfaction only in the good of other beings, and which are, therefore, called *social* or *benevolent*; and, secondly, those which do not require such a condition for their gratification, and are commonly denominated *personal* or *selfish*. Friendship, love, and all sympathetic impulses, are embraced in the former class; curiosity, the desire of power, and a number of other instincts, in the latter. It is unnecessary to observe, that, essentially, impulses of the first class are no more disinterested than those of the second, nor impulses of the second more interested than those of the first; such epithets have no meaning, when used in reference to instincts; they apply to self-love and the moral motive only; all our tendencies crave gratification equally, only in one case the good of our fellow-beings, and in the other our own good, is the means by which they are satisfied.

These two classes of impulses have given rise to forms of the selfish system, which differ from each other by very marked characteristics. Some philosophers, either believing that the gratification of the benevolent tendencies is the most productive of good and of happiness, or thinking that thus they might

redeem self-love from the charge of being a personal and unsocial principle, have sought for good and happiness, in the exercise of the social affections, and have made this their fundamental maxim; hence a class of selfish systems, which have defined happiness to consist in the development and satisfaction of the benevolent instincts of our nature. In their practical results, these systems approach so nearly to the moral systems, that they have often, on that account, been classed among them; but this is an illusion which the least reflection will remove. The end proposed to man in these systems is always his own private good and pleasure; the good and pleasure of others is only a means to this; but the moral system proposes no such end; it neither sets before man, as his end, his private good, nor the good of others, but only absolute good, or, in other words, that which is conformed to the nature of things; this is a higher end than any other, recommending neither personal good nor the good of our fellow-beings exclusively, but approving both in so far as they are in conformity with order, and no further. Between the practical results, too, of the moral system, and of these forms of the selfish system, there are most noticeable differences, which we may see fully illustrated in the philanthropy of the day. I allude particularly to a heartlessness of charity on the one side, and an imprudence in bestowing benefits on the other, which are equally to be condemned; the first, for the selfishness of its motive; the second, for the blindness of its acts: the benevolence of impulse escapes, at least from the first of these

defects; though only that benevolence which finds its inspiration and its direction in the love of order, can avoid them both.

To this class of selfish systems a third may be added, which merits particular attention: it has originated with philosophers, who, perceiving that, of all our agreeable emotions, that which follows the performance of duty is the most delightful, while at the same time it is more under our own and less under others' control than any other pleasure, have thought that its pursuit is the best means of securing our own happiness, and that we should sacrifice all others to obtain it. More than once it has occurred, that, in eras when selfish systems have prevailed, such a system has gained for its author the reputation of being the restorer and avenger of morality; and yet, gentlemen, you must see, that, in such a system, pleasure is still the end, and virtue only a means, and, therefore, that it is truly quite as selfish as the systems of Hobbes or of Epicurus. It is, however, infinitely more absurd; for virtue, transformed into a means of pleasure, ceases to be virtue, and gives no longer pleasure; so that the system destroys the very end which it recommends for our pursuit. I should say the same of the doctrine which exhorts us to practise virtue as a means of gaining the rewards of another life: this form of the selfish system implies the same error, and differs from the former only by being more thoroughly interested. The partisans of the former might well be called the Epicureans, and those of the latter, the Benthamites of virtue.

With these two systems, which make virtue a



means of securing pleasure, we might class another, which regards virtue as delicate, noble, and beautiful, while it looks upon selfishness as vulgar, gross, and ugly, and prefers the first from motives of taste. This system might be classed, either among those which we are now considering, or among those which, seeking the principle of morality, in a conception of the reason, misunderstand our nature, and overlook the truth. It may be considered as belonging to the latter, when it looks chiefly at the beauty of virtue, and to the class of selfish systems, when it is principally occupied with thoughts of the gratification of taste which virtue gives, and recommends virtue as the means of procuring it. This system may be considered the highest refinement of selfishness; and it is adopted, though quite unconsciously, by a multitude of well-born and highly-cultivated people, whose conduct is marked by acts of disinterestedness, not so much from elevation of soul as from delicacy of taste, and who dislike selfishness as they do bad odors, only because it affects them disagreeably; they are as selfish in their repugnance as the selfishness which displeases them; and vice can seduce them, if it will but cover its deformities with perfumed flowers.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the selfish systems, produced by preferring pleasures which come from the prospect of another's good, to those which are called peculiarly *personal*. Opposed to these systems are others, in which a preference of a contrary character appears to prevail; I say *appears*, because it is only rarely that such a preference can be expressed

in any distinct and definite form of language. The principal obstacle to the selfish system being found in that moral faith of every human being which utterly contradicts it, attempts to reconcile them must be frequent; hence numerous systems which have endeavored to effect this reconciliation by presenting the pursuit of pleasure under its most agreeable and social aspects. But as no such reason exists for mutilating pleasure in an opposite way, while all considerations, on the contrary, direct the attention of philosophers to its social character, the selfish tendency of this element of our nature has been seldom exaggerated. The systems, therefore, to which I now allude, are marked, not so much by a systematic as by an implied preference of the purely personal elements of self-love; and in this they are distinguished broadly from others which have professed such a preference boldly and openly. The system of Hobbes, for example, is an exceedingly gross form of the selfish system, so nakedly and unreservedly does it expose its purely personal tendencies; and that of Lamétrie is yet more remarkable; indeed, it may be said that, in this system, the mutilation of the element of pleasure is avowed; so exclusively are the most selfish tendencies of our nature regarded as the only source of happiness. Selfishness, under this form, becomes harmless; for it drops its mask, and displays its hideous features. And it is when it assumes this form, too, that it loses all pretensions to be considered philosophical, as I have already explained. Practically, however, this form of the selfish system is nowise rare; it is, of course, utterly

hostile to society, and against it are the laws principally directed. #

Such are the chief varieties of the systems of selfishness. Narrow as is its principle, you have seen that it is still constantly met with, both in philosophy and in social life. This mutilation of human nature has itself been mutilated in various ways; so complex are the volitions originating in the influence of this element. You have seen that it is to various modes of imperfectly analyzing the phenomenon of self-love that the different forms of the selfish doctrine are to be referred. The phenomenon of self-love, indeed, presents two kinds of complexity—good or pleasure, as the consequence, and utility, as the means, constituting the first, and the different sorts of good and pleasure of which we are capable, the second. If you examine this twofold complexity, you will find each represented by a peculiar form of the selfish doctrine. Such, gentlemen, are the conclusions to which it has been my wish to lead your minds in the present lecture.

But I should leave my work imperfectly done, if I should neglect to remind you of the two different attempts which have been made to deduce from the principle of self-interest the rule of general interest— attempts which have produced two new varieties of the selfish system, to be added to those which have arisen directly from the analysis of the fundamental fact; and these exhaust the possible forms under which the system can be presented.

These two new varieties of the selfish system agree in pretending that the substitution of the rule of

general interest for that of private interest is legitimate. They differ from each other in this — that the one finds the proof of the legitimacy of this substitution in the phenomenon of sympathy, the other in the necessity of our advancing the interests of others as a means of securing their aid.

In my refutation of Bentham, I have sufficiently explained both the nature and the fruitlessness of such attempts; I am not bound, therefore, in the present lecture, to go over that ground again, and I limit myself to saying, that the selfish system has very frequently presented itself under this disguise, and that its chief victories have thus been gained; and, if the follower of this system would but live up to his rule, undoubtedly it is the form which, of all others, would practically approach most nearly to morality. Faithful to this rule, however, no one can be; for, the general good being considered merely as the means of securing private good, every individual feels that he has continually the right to violate it, if he thinks that he can, by so doing, advance his interests. Practically, then, we do not find that this form offers any surer guaranties of right conduct than other forms; although it has always one good effect — that, by leading men to consider the various relations by which they are united to their fellow-beings, it induces them to think of them oftener and respect them more.

I have now finished my notice of the various forms of the selfish system; and it only remains to be remarked, that, under all, its essential character and radical defects continue unchanged. Whether the

individual pursues the gratification of impulse, or the accompanying pleasure, or the different objects fitted to produce them; whether he prefers, as most fitted to promote his highest good, the satisfaction of certain tendencies and pleasures; or, finally, whether, for the attainment of his end, he adopts the circuitous means of general interest, or the direct pursuit of his own,—it is of little consequence to determine: he is impelled to act, in each and every instance, by calculations of what is best for himself. His motive is always at once personal and reflective—in other words, interested; it is essentially distinct, therefore, from the motive of impulse, which is personal without being reflective; and from the moral motive, which is reflective, but impersonal—or, in other words, disinterested. Self-love remains essentially the same, therefore, under all its forms, and impresses a similar character upon the various schemes of conduct to which it leads. One selfish rule for life is preferable to another, only because it may approach more nearly the rule given by the moral motive. But even should these, in any case, appear to be identical, the identity would be confined to external acts; and, though doing precisely what the moral and impersonal motive would command, the individual's conduct would be as far removed from virtue as if his action were directly opposite.

Finally, it should be mentioned, as a characteristic of the selfish system, which is never lost, that it suggests, and can suggest, no idea of obligation; and this characteristic modifies the influence of every impulse which it gives. As the motive is always

the good, the pleasure, or the interest of the individual, this motive must have itself a character of obligation, before it can communicate it; but such a character it neither has nor can have. In vain do you say that an act will be agreeable or advantageous; I do not, on that account, feel myself bound to do it. To tell me that I ought to do something because it is good for me, is a deduction which I cannot feel to be just, so long as I distinctly recognize in my reason that it is always what is absolutely good which should be done. It must be proved, then, that what is a good for me is good in itself, before I can feel a sense of obligation to secure my own good; and this is but saying, in other words, that the motive of self-interest is not a legitimate one in itself, but needs the sanction of the moral motive to give it this character of legitimacy.

Yet more; it might be said that the selfish motive does not even offer a reason for acting. A reason is an evident truth, throwing light upon and explaining the particular question to which it is applied. Shall I, or shall I not, act? This is the practical question to be settled. Self-love answers—Act, because your nature demands it. That this may be a reason, it is necessary that it should express an evident truth; but so far is this from being evident, that reason at once demands its proof. If I am satisfied with the reply of self-love, I obey not a reason, but a natural desire. As a matter of fact, then, the follower of interest acts not from reason, but from passion. He does, indeed, reason as to the best means of gratifying this passion, and so far, it may be said, his conduct

results from reasoning; but it is to an impulse of passion, and not to a conviction of reason, that he yields as a motive; and, therefore, although he reasons about his acts, yet cannot he be called reasonable in performing them. We act reasonably only when we act morally; because then alone do we obey a reason or an evident truth, which is this—It is right that absolute good should be always done.

If we complete our analysis, we shall find that to say to any one, Do this, because it is for your good, is to say, This is good, because it is good for you—a proposition which is very far from being self-evident. Not only, then, are the suggestions of self-love not obligatory, but they imply a proposition which is not, and cannot be, an evident truth, until individual and absolute good are proved to be identical. So far, therefore, from proving the obligation of certain acts, self-love does not even supply a reason for their performance. Thus, in the attempt to explain and justify the selfish principle, do we escape from its control; and in the very reason which we find for yielding to it do we form a conception of the moral motive.

## LECTURE XVI.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SMITH.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE endeavored, in preceding lectures, to give you an idea of the systems which find in the love of self the principle of morality. They form the first class of systems which, in their examination of human nature, either overlook or mutilate the moral principle. To-day I pass to another class.

The radical error of the systems now to be discussed is a far less important one than that of the systems already considered. These latter, by placing the principle of morality in the pursuit of personal good, do nothing less, in fact, than deny the existence, in human nature, of any disinterested motive—than which a grosser error cannot be committed. The systems which now come under our attention are guilty of no such wrong as this: they admit the existence of a motive distinct from self-love; they recognize the fact of disinterestedness, and find in this the principle of morality: their mistake is, that they overlook the real fact, or misapprehend its nature. To-day, then, gentlemen, we are to enter upon the examination of systems which teach that



man does often act disinterestedly, but which, in their attempt to ascend to the source of this disinterestedness, miss the way, or see it but dimly, and thus misrepresent the true principle of morality.

Disinterested systems, if I may call them so, have originated in modern times, as they have in all the great philosophical eras with which history makes us acquainted. When the spirit of philosophy first awakes in any country, no inquiry is made as to the principle of morality; for the human mind meets with questions of more pressing importance, which it is long occupied in solving. But the time comes, when philosophy finally begins to discuss the moral problem, and seeks to learn the destiny of man, and, from a knowledge of it, to deduce rules for conduct; and, in all cases, the first solution adopted is the doctrine of happiness, or the selfish system. The reason for this is plain. Good sense suggests that, in our attempt to solve the moral problem, we should look for the determining motives of human volitions; and, among these motives, none is so apparent at once to the eye of the observer as the love of pleasure and the dread of pain. In every philosophical movement, therefore, when the human mind has commenced its search for the principle of conduct and the motive of action, has the selfish system first appeared. In most cases, the doctrine has been taught without a perception of its consequences; but, whether its discoverer and promulgator has recognized them or not, sooner or later they practically display themselves; for never in the world can a principle be introduced without a development of its natural fruits: in the

course of events, earlier or later, are they all necessarily revealed. Now, the consequences of self-love are odious in their effects on human nature; and they are so, not only because they mutilate it, but because it is the noblest part which they reject. Universal sympathy accompanies disinterested purposes and acts, while antipathy is oftener felt for interested ones. The true consequences of self-love cannot be seen, then, without exciting against them a general indignation and disgust, in time extended to the system in which they originate. Observe, the doctrine contained in the fundamental maxim, that the pursuit of happiness is the end of man, has nothing in itself which shocks our minds; on the contrary, we may say, that, understood in a large and comprehensive manner, it is true; so that the system, regarded merely in its principle and its superficial influence, has nothing to excite alarm, and has often been received by the noblest minds without a scruple or a doubt; as, for instance, in the seventeenth century, it was adopted by Leibnitz on the one side, and by Bossuet on the other, though nothing could seem more opposed than the doctrine of interest to the Christian spirit of the latter, and to the gigantic and severe intellect of the first. As soon, however, as a more thorough analysis has brought to light the strict and necessary consequences of the system, and revealed its real tendencies, conscience becomes alarmed, good sense raises its voice, and a philosophical reaction follows, the first object of which is to prove that there is something disinterested in the human soul, and consequently another motive than the pursuit of selfish

good. Then follows a more philosophical and rigorous analysis of the different motives which influence the will — an analysis whose object is to find the sources of disinterestedness in human nature, and in them the spring of all virtue and devotion. To discover this disinterested principle demands a far more attentive study of psychological facts than to see the principle of self-interest. For this plays on the surface, if I may say so, while the operation of the other is profound; and it may therefore with truth be said, that the philosophy of self-love is the philosophy of children. To find this solution of the moral problem demands no reflection, no study of man. But the principle of disinterestedness is apprehended with more difficulty — so deep in our inmost nature does it act; so that, in the reaction to which I have alluded, many errors and half-truths are advanced, before the true principle of morality is conceived with precision. Therefore it is, that, in modern times, we have seen such a multitude of systems, which — all proclaiming the fact of disinterestedness, and pretending to indicate its real source — have given, nevertheless, such different explanations. A like diversity characterized, in ancient times, the disinterested school, although it was then more limited, because human opinions, in those ages, were moulded into simpler forms than in modern days, and because, as analysis extends further to shades of ideas, and multiplied systems are invented to represent them, these systems blend and assimilate more together, and are less marked by distinctive traits.

The systems which profess to base morality upon

the foundation of a disinterested principle, are of two kinds. The distinction of the first is, that it finds the origin of disinterested volitions in an intellectual perception of moral good and evil. In other words, the first class of these systems explains the existence of our ideas of moral good and evil by an operation of reason, which judges acts to be good and bad in themselves, and absolutely. According to this doctrine, therefore, the perception of moral good and evil is a rational fact—a phenomenon, not of the sensibility, but of the intellect.

The second class of disinterested systems, on the contrary, explains the distinction between good and evil in the soul, and the disinterested volitions thence resulting, by facts which belong to the sensibility, and not to the reason; so that disinterestedness, according to this doctrine, is not the result of a judgment, but of an instinctive impulse.

Sentimentalism and rationalism are, therefore, the two characteristics, by which systems professing to be disinterested, and, under some form or other, opposing the selfish system, may be distinguished and classified.

My desire is, gentlemen, by an exposition of a few of the systems embraced under these two categories, to give you an idea of all which either one class or the other may include. I cannot attempt to describe each of these various doctrines, for the task would be endless; and it will be quite sufficient, if I show you, by a few examples, how some, by seeking the disinterested element in the sensibility, and others in reason, have disfigured the true principle. These

systems are all worthy of our highest regard; the intentions of their authors were generous and noble; and, though they have erred in their search of the disinterested motive of volition, they yet have put faith in disinterestedness, and some have caught glimpses of it, and approached it nearly.

I will begin with an exposition of the sentimental systems; and from them I will select the one which, of all others, is the most ingenious and original — I mean that of Adam Smith, as it is exhibited in his work entitled “The Theory of Moral Sentiments.” In the present lecture, it will be my purpose to give you some idea of the principles of this most remarkable system.

Smith is the most original writer that Scotland has produced for a hundred and fifty years. With his great work on political economy you must already be somewhat acquainted. Of that science he was truly the father — establishing it, as he did, upon a foundation of such facts as would have escaped the attention of any mind less penetrating than his own. With him, philosophy was, comparatively, a secondary interest; and the principal results of his inquiries upon such subjects may be found in his work on the moral sentiments. The views which this work contains, however, are characterized by all the originality and richness of his mind; and, deceived as he undoubtedly was as to the principle of morality, it may yet with truth be said, that the facts of human nature, by him brought to light and analyzed, make this book one of the most precious and useful that can be consulted in studying the science of human nature. I will limit

myself to a description of the chief facts upon which his system is based ; they are perfectly true in themselves, and his error was only in deducing from them consequences which they do not justify.

Whenever we see a man deeply affected with any sentiment or passion, our nature, without the intervention of either reason or will, tends to reproduce the sentiment or passion ; in other words, our nature is disposed to place itself in the situation of the person who is the object of our regard. This phenomenon, though obscure in certain cases, is perfectly clear and apparent in others. When we gaze upon a mother, whose whole look and air manifest warm love for the child upon her knee, we cannot but feel a similar disposition springing up in our own hearts ; and, in a thousand instances, which it is not worth our while particularly to notice, the same thing might be observed, as every one will testify. Yet more ; this natural inclination to feel in ourselves the emotions which we witness in another human being goes so far, that we even experience it in regard to beings of other species, when they are to any considerable degree animated, and bear affinity to ourselves. We cannot see, for instance, a dog manifesting deep inward pain, without feeling a similar emotion ; and the joyfulness and vivacity of a bird, as it skips singing from bough to bough, awakens in our minds also joyful emotions. And this instinct acts even when the object that excites it is repugnant to our taste. The sight of a serpent creeping with undulating movement on the ground inspires us with some disposition to imitate him. And, in general, whenever a sensible

phenomenon, of which we ourselves are capable, is observed in any being whose nature is at all similar to our own, there springs up a desire to feel and do the same. This property of human nature is sympathy, or, at least, the root and germ of that to which we give this name.

That our agreeable or disagreeable sentiments acquire new force and acuteness when shared by a fellow-being, is a fact demonstrated by innumerable circumstances. When we are in a theatre, where but few are assembled to behold the representation, we experience infinitely less pleasure than when the room is crowded, and we are conscious that all around us are minds affected like our own; this is notorious. The mere thought that our souls are in unison with other souls — that the sentiments which they experience are similar to ours in nature and degree — this mere thought is in itself a source of pleasure; in this mere sense of harmony we deeply rejoice.

To these two facts a third may be added. So strong and instinctive is our desire for this agreement of feeling between ourselves and those around us, that, whenever we experience an emotion, and express it where any person is present who is not similarly affected, involuntarily and unconsciously we lower our tone and soften down the utterance of our feeling, that we may thus be brought more nearly into harmony with his calmness; while, on the other hand, the unexcited person is quickened by the sight of our emotion, till, by an instinctive complaisance, his sympathetic feeling rises as high as our original feeling. This fact is one of such constant occurrence,

that all must have observed it. When you are strongly moved by any passion, I ask, do you manifest it in its full force in the presence of indifferent spectators? Certainly not. You temper its expression, from a regard for their feelings. And they, on their part, being conscious that you are under the influence of a certain impulse, and that you are partially concealing it from a desire of being in harmony with them, not only share your feeling through sympathy, but, by an effort, seek to be animated with equal strength of passion, that the state of their sensibility may correspond with yours. These three facts, which have now been noticed, are purely instinctive; neither reason nor will concur to produce them.

There are various laws governing this principle of sympathy, which the acute mind of Smith succeeded in discovering and establishing. I wish to give you an idea of them, before proceeding to describe the moral consequences which were deduced from them by this philosopher. But, first, let me present a single observation upon one point where I differ from Smith. Smith thinks that this natural propensity is not one which, in every case, takes the form of sympathy, but that often, far from feeling a desire to imitate, we are conscious, instead, of an antipathy. For instance, when we see a man impelled by some malevolent passion, our nature, Smith thinks, experiences a repugnance, rather than any wish to be inspired with a similar feeling. This fact I am, of course, not disposed to deny; but I explain it quite differently. I believe that the first impulse of every human being, without exception, where signs



of any emotion in a fellow-being are manifested, is to be similarly affected; but this impulse, it appears to me, is, in many instances, restrained and modified, either by reflection or by a sympathy yet more powerful for emotions experienced by other beings. This, however, is a point which is of importance only as a matter of science. It is perfectly true that there are cases in which sympathy is simple, while in others it is divided among two, three, or more objects, according as more or fewer persons are affected by the passion manifested. And it is to the laws which govern sympathy in such cases that I now wish to direct your attention.

Let us suppose that we see a man who is excited with the passion of anger, and not without adequate cause; instantly two facts of sympathy appear. On the one side, I sympathize with the anger which is manifested; on the other, I sympathize with him who is the object of this rage, because I see that he is threatened with a danger. Whether the individual is conscious or ignorant of his danger, imagination still represents him to me as exposed to it, and I feel as a human being should who is the object of another's hate. Sympathy places me at once, then, in the situation of the angry man, and of the person against whom his indignation is directed; my sympathies, therefore, become divided; part attach themselves to him who is in a passion, part to him who is the object of aversion. From this it follows, that if I myself am excited with anger, and experience the desire felt by all men, in different degrees, of being in harmony with their fellow-creatures, I must moderate the ex-

pression of my passion ; for in proportion as I control myself will their sympathy with the object of my anger lessen, and their sympathy with me increase. This guarded exhibition of passion, in the presence of fellow-men, is instructive in all, especially if the persons around are strangers. A man alone in his chamber gives way to the full violence of his rage ; in the presence of his wife and children, he restrains, in some degree, the utterance of his passion ; but in the presence of one whom he holds in high esteem, and whose respect he desires to gain, his excitement at once and instinctively disappears. This fact is an additional proof of that need of sympathy, which, as we have seen, all human beings feel. Sympathy demands that the expression of any passion should be moderated, and instinctively it is done ; sympathy requires that the least manifestation of them should be repressed, and they are repressed at once. Suppose—although the supposition is incredible—that I am animated by a purely malevolent affection ; or, in other words, that unjustly, and without cause, I am filled with a desire to do some one an injury ; in such a case, according to Smith, this malevolent feeling would excite no sympathy ; according to my idea, it would, although the sympathy would be controlled by that felt for the object of my malevolence : in either view, the result is the same. In a case where such malevolence is exhibited, sympathy tends to attach itself exclusively to the being who is threatened. The man, then, who feels it, is naturally inclined, not only to express it with moderation, but not to manifest it at all ; it is the bad, therefore, who are hypocrites ;

and hypocrisy is instinctive in them, and not the result of reflection only; reason, indeed, may give new force to the instinct, and the love of esteem may lead to dissimulation; but the feeling precedes the act of reasoning, and this instinctive impulse, according to Smith, is only one form in which is manifested the desire of being in harmony of feeling with our kind.

Thus have I shown you some instances in which sympathy is composed of several and of opposite elements; there are others, where it is simple, and, consequently, of a uniform character. Sympathy of this sort may be seen in cases where our emotions have no reference to the well-being of others; for example, in the love of truth: however strong this feeling may be, it cannot affect the happiness of our fellow-beings; the disposition, therefore, can excite in other men only emotions of pure sympathy; and there is no motive of instinct or reason why we should conceal them at all, or prevent the expression of our whole feeling. However much I may love beauty or truth, I see not why I should moderate the utterance of my pleasure in the presence of others; for I have no ground for supposing that they are animated by any opposing sentiment.

Finally, there are inward emotions which may excite sympathies of various, though not opposing kinds. Thus, when I see a man full of emotions of pity, charity, love, friendship, a twofold sympathy arises; I sympathize with the benevolence of the one party, and the gratitude of the other — with the object of the benevolent feeling, and the object of the grateful

feeling. Now, as you will see, these two kinds of sympathy, so far from being opposed, tend to strengthen each other : it follows, therefore, that the benevolent affections are, of all others, those which inspire most sympathy, and which, consequently, contribute most to produce among men that harmony of feeling which all instinctively desire ; and finally, it follows, that there can be no necessity for dissimulation, by restraining ourselves in giving them expression.

From this short exposition, you may see, that the analysis of the phenomenon of sympathy has furnished Smith with an explanation of a vast variety of the facts of human nature—an explanation which is as ingenious as its fundamental idea is simple. How he employs it to account for moral facts, properly so called, I will now proceed to show.

What, asks Smith, is the approbation or disapprobation of another's sentiments ? In what cases do we approve—in what disapprove them ? On reflection, we shall see, that we approve when we share them, and disapprove them when we do not ; that we approve them entirely when we share them entirely, and partially when we share them partially ; in a word, that approbation and disapprobation are not only in our reason an effect of the purely sensible phenomena of sympathy and antipathy, but in every case are an exact representation of these feelings. If this is true, the origin of approbation or disapprobation, in reference to others, is perfectly explained ; they spring from sensibility—from the instinctive phenomenon of sympathy. Our judgments upon the sentiments and acts of our fellow-beings are really only the ex-

pression of the degree of our sympathy or antipathy for these sentiments and acts. But we thus account for only a part of our moral judgments; it remains to be seen, how those arise which are directed to our own sentiments and acts.

Smith asserts, that if a man should live alone, he would never judge of his actions as being good or bad; for the only means by which he could determine the quality of actions would be wanting. This singular opinion of his is founded on the idea that sympathy is the principle from which is deduced the rule by which we estimate the moral qualities of all acts, whether of ourselves or others, and distinguish the good from the bad. Now, as it is absolutely necessary that two human beings at least should exist, before the sentiment of sympathy can be developed, it is impossible that the solitary man should conceive this rule, and thus judge of the morality of actions. But how does sympathy enable him to conceive this rule? Let us see.

Smith states, as a fact, that we have the power, whenever we are animated by any disposition, or perform any act, or follow any course of conduct, of looking upon this sentiment, act, or conduct, as an indifferent spectator, and of experiencing, in some degree, such a sentiment of sympathy as we should at seeing such sentiments, acts, and conduct in another person. Now, is this fact upon which Smith rests his explanation exactly true? Have we really the power of making ourselves spectators of our own dispositions and acts, and of feeling at the sight such sentiments as the dispositions and acts of other beings

excite? For my part, gentlemen, I am ready to say that we do, undoubtedly, possess this power; and, with a few exceptions, I am ready to recognize the effects which he ascribes to it.

Smith declares that when we are carried away by a violent passion, this ~~\* passion~~ still continues to act, though in so feeble a manner that its influence is scarcely to be traced; and, further, that when the passion is abated and calmed, it reappears in full energy with all its consequences; and this is true; for then do we represent vividly to ourselves the appearance which we have exhibited, and feel, in all their distinctness, the sentiments of sympathy or antipathy which our acts are fitted to awake. It is of little consequence, in Smith's opinion, whether these feelings of sympathy or antipathy are more or less acute, or whether they are manifested earlier or later: the important fact is, that we do really experience them: he asks us only to grant that we have the capacity of being thus impressed, and his system, he thinks, is justified.

If, says he, we have an urgent natural desire to be, in our dispositions and sentiments, in harmony with our fellow-beings, it is only necessary for us to feel that a particular disposition would excite their antipathy, to make us consider it bad; and if, on the contrary, we are conscious of a disposition which would excite their sympathy, we shall think it good; and, finally, should we be aware that our state of feeling is one which would excite their mingled sympathy and antipathy, we should judge it to be neither perfectly good nor perfectly bad. Hence a principle by which

\* for "action" read "lover or property"

we judge of our own sentiments and acts, by sympathy, as we should those of our fellow-beings; so that, just as we should estimate the acts of others, by the sympathy or antipathy which they excite in us, do we estimate our own, by the sympathy or antipathy which they are fitted to excite in others, — a sympathy and antipathy, for which, in both cases, we are indebted to our power of placing ourselves in the situation of other persons, and thus entering into their feelings.

From these two principles, for the moral estimation of the sentiments and acts of ourselves and others, results a more general principle, by which to judge of all dispositions and modes of conduct: it is by means of these that we ascend to the general maxim, which, according to Smith, is the fundamental principle of morality — that the goodness of an act is in direct ratio to the approbation which it receives from others, and that the best acts are those which are fitted to excite pure and universal sympathy, — a sympathy unmingled with antipathy, — the sympathy not of a few, but of every individual of the human race. Hence, gentlemen, a scale of the moral good and evil of acts, graduated by this universal standard, and a code of rules for conduct.

In proportion as experience teaches us to recognize the acts which are fitted to awaken pure sympathy or antipathy, or mingled sympathy and antipathy, do we learn to estimate their value, and impress on the memory their moral quality. Hence the maxims and rules which we find in the minds of the mature. When once discovered by experience and stored in

memory, we become able to form judgments immediately, by means of these ascertained and established rules; and thus the labor of making estimates of our own and others' acts is abridged, and self-command strengthened, in cases where passion is so violent as to deprive us of our power of judging by sympathy. At such times, I may rely for direction on the rule which pronounces the emotion good or bad, and yield to or restrain it, without fear of feeling remorse when my calmness is restored. The same is true of those instances in which the perplexities and cares of life prevent me from freely entering into the inmost feelings of others, and subjecting their dispositions to the test of my sympathy or antipathy: the test by which I must then judge is the rule that pronounces what sentiments and acts are proper in any given situation. Hence we may appreciate the utility of the rules which result from experience, and are the fruits of repeated applications of the principle of sympathy or antipathy.

Such is the manner in which Smith explains, by sympathy, the fundamental phenomenon of moral distinctions. And of course he finds no difficulty in accounting for secondary moral phenomena. But, as time will not permit me to follow him into all these details, I will select, as a specimen, the origin, which, with entire fidelity to his main principle, he assigns to the sentiment of merit or demerit.

You are already well informed as to the nature of this phenomenon; you are aware, that, when we contemplate a good or bad action, a judgment of reason accompanies our sensation of pleasure or pain,



and that, in the one case, we consider the agent worthy of reward, in the other, of punishment, and are thus inclined to wish them happiness or suffering. This phenomenon admits of a very simple explanation in the system of Smith. When I witness an act of benevolence, I experience not only a feeling of sympathy for the state of mind of the benevolent person, but also for that of the object of his kindness. What is this? It is gratitude. And what is gratitude, except a desire of benefiting him who has done us a favor, and because he has done it? Participating as a spectator in this feeling, I wish well to the author of the act; I feel, in other words, that he merits happiness as a reward for his conduct. What happens, on the contrary, when I see a man animated with malevolence? I feel no sympathy for him; but all my feelings are directed towards him who is the object of hatred, into whose situation and state of mind I fully enter. Now, what are your emotions when you perceive yourself to be regarded with aversion? Instinctively, you desire to return ill for ill; a spectator, then, who sympathizes with your feelings, must judge your enemy to be worthy of punishment; that is to say, deserving of the pain, which, in his malevolence, he seeks to inflict on you. Such, in Smith's view, is the natural explanation of the judgment of merit and demerit.

With apparently equal facility, he explains the pleasure that we experience when we have done well, and the remorse which accompanies wrong doing. By my power of becoming a spectator of my own dispositions and acts, I feel for myself, when I have acted

right, a sentiment of sympathy; and this emotion makes me conclude that others, who behold the act, feel for me a similar sentiment. I am conscious, therefore, of a profound accordance between my conduct and their feelings, and between their emotions and my own; and we have before seen how delightful is this sense of harmony. In this, then, consists the pleasure of doing well. Yet more; having established the rule by which to determine the moral quality of acts, I feel authorized to pronounce my conduct right, because I have learned that all conduct is right which secures the sympathy of others. In this consists the approbation which I feel for myself, and which blends with the sensation of pleasure. For the opposite reason, I feel, when I have done wrong, the peculiar pain which is called *remorse*, and disapprove and blame myself.

Thus have I exhibited the general elements of Smith's system; and you can readily imagine how it may be carried out and completed. In his work, however, the applications of it are innumerable, and their ingenuity and delicacy are infinite.

As soon as a man's nature is developed, and the principle of moral estimation and the rules of experience are established in his mind, he possesses all necessary elements for the approbation of any benevolent act which he may behold. He experiences a twofold sympathy; first, for the motives of the agent; secondly, for the happiness and gratitude of the object. Again, he perceives the conformity of the act done with the rule of morality communicated by experience; so that, independently of the instinctive judgment,

there is also a judgment of reason upon its goodness. A mature man, then, feels, in the contemplation of a good action, not only a sentiment of sympathy, and a kind emotion for the agent, but to these is added a rational judgment of approbation. In children, and often in men of vulgar minds, this third element, indeed, is wanting; for, before it can exist, reason must have created, or experience introduced, the general rules of morality whose formation we have explained; and approbation, as a judgment of reason, is only the recognition of an act as conformable to these rules; it necessarily, therefore, presupposes them. But this is not all; the action appears to us fitted, by its nature, to promote such a general system of conduct as will tend to bring the sentiments of all men into harmony. Now, this universal harmony is felt to be eminently beautiful, or, rather, as we might say, to be moral beauty itself; and we pronounce the act, therefore, not only good, but beautiful. It is here that Smith finds the principle of moral beauty, which he esteems the source of all beauty.

As this latter point may seem less clear than those already mentioned, let us dwell a little longer upon its consideration.

If all men should conduct themselves in such a way as to secure for their acts the sympathy of their fellow-beings, it is plain that there would ensue an entire accordance of feeling, and consequently a state of perfect harmony. It is this harmony that is beautiful; and Smith compares the pleasure, which the

prospect of it affords, to that which we experience when gazing upon a complicated piece of mechanism, whose various movements resolve themselves into one. This gratification of taste is felt, to some degree, in the contemplation of every action that is morally good.

Smith has not overlooked nor concealed the fact, that, in many instances, a good act, far from securing the kind affections of men, subjects us, on the contrary, to their hate; and he explains this anomaly, by saying that men are often animated by passions and prejudices which are themselves discordant with the universal laws of morality. He acknowledges, therefore, that there are circumstances, in which a good man is called upon to brave the antipathy of his immediate associates, that he may win the sympathy of mankind at large. And it is here that the application of the principle of sympathy becomes peculiarly delicate and difficult, and its insufficiency displayed. But it must be fully granted, that Smith has not hesitated to bring his system to this test; he has admitted, that the virtuous man must often, in doing what he ought, — and precisely because he does what he ought, — place himself in opposition to the spirit of his country and of his age, and thus bring upon himself the antipathy of his contemporaries. Smith might have passed by in silence this case, which it is so embarrassing, by his principles, to explain; and, therefore, although his attempted explanation does but little credit to the logical powers of the philosopher, yet the candor, with which he has stated

the difficulty, secures our respect for the probity of the man.

Such, then, gentlemen, are the fundamental ideas of Smith. In my next lecture, I will present some critical remarks upon this ethical system.

## LECTURE XVII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

ETHICAL systems are characterized and distinguished by the nature of their answers to certain questions, which every ethical system must attempt to solve. The destiny of man on earth—that is to say, the end to which his efforts should be directed—the test by which good is distinguished from evil in conduct—or, in other words, the rule by which the moral quality of acts may be determined—and, lastly, the motive which impels us to act conformably to this rule, and insures its supreme control over our wills—such are the fundamental points, which it is the object of every ethical system to determine, and which different systems determine differently. A system, which should give no answer to either of these questions, would not be an ethical system. In answering any one, however, it answers all; for, so closely connected are the end of life, the rule of moral estimation, and the legitimate motive for action, that, when one is determined, the answer to the other two naturally follows; and, consequently, if we know the

opinion of a philosopher upon either of these points, we are acquainted with his entire ethical system.

These considerations indicate the proper method of discovering the true character of an ethical system. If we desire to ascertain definitely the character of a system, and to obtain an expression of it, precisely as it is, the true way is to seek a reply to these three questions, or to some one of the three; when its answer is given, we shall know all that can be known about it, and can classify it.

Answers to these several questions are not given with equal readiness by all systems; the replies of some are immediate and direct; but those of others are so subtle and equivocal, so inconsistent with themselves, and contradictory to the common sense of men, that we cannot, without difficulty, disengage the thought which they express, and strip the disguise from their real meaning.

Selfish systems give the clearest answer to the three questions which we have suggested. And hence arises the simplicity of their solution of the moral problem, derived as it is from an order of phenomena of which every individual has a distinct and vivid consciousness. A system, which teaches that pleasure is the end of life, is comprehended at once; and, if the pursuit of pleasure is the end, it is evident that the motive must be the desire of happiness, and, consequently, that the test of goodness in conduct is the tendency of acts to promote our welfare. Nothing, then, can be simpler or clearer than the selfish systems; and the only difficulty in regard to them is to detect the shades of difference which distinguish them.

This is far from being the case with systems which seek in instinct for an explanation of the moral facts of human nature; these are as obscure as the instinct itself. Obligated, in establishing their foundation, to describe, in their primitive aspect and subsequent transformations, numerous facts, — which, as they belong to the spontaneous part of our nature, are most subtile and transient, — these systems do not present that appearance of simplicity, by which the selfish systems are characterized; and it is necessary, therefore, if we would understand exactly their answers to the fundamental questions of morality, to analyze them with care, and follow the various windings by which they attempt to evade them. And, true as this is of the instinctive systems in general, it is peculiarly so of the system of Smith, whose mind was so ingenious and fruitful, that it sacrificed willingly, to the pleasure of describing facts and of displaying their various relations and consequences, the rapid and methodical order that never loses sight of the thread of its inductions, but proceeds, with clearness of reasoning, from the phenomena by which it professes to explain moral questions, to the precise conclusions fairly involved.

I have studied Smith's system with all the attention which it demands, that I might be able to give a thorough and exact idea of it; and I feel prepared to describe its precise answers to the three great questions which every ethical system is bound to solve. It is necessary, if we would judge of the truth of this complicated system, that we should see its exact nature; and we can do this only by bringing



it to the test of these three questions, and determining precisely its answer to each. This, then, I shall attempt to do; I shall successively present to the doctrine of sympathy these questions, state its answers, examine each of these answers in itself and in comparison with human nature, and thus endeavor to determine the adequateness and truth of the system. It may seem as if such an examination must be unnecessarily long; but, besides the consideration that it is absolutely required by the obscurity of the system, it may be said that we shall really gain time in pursuing this course; for, if we can but discover the error of Smith's system, we shall have equally detected the mistakes of all other systems which seek, in the spontaneous impulses of human nature, a solution of the moral problem. And be assured, that the instinctive system will lose nothing in being judged by the system of sympathy; its defence was never in better hands. Smith was a profound observer, an ingenious dialectician, and a fine writer; no other philosopher has ever surrounded the system with such an air of plausibility, nor brought to its support so many facts, nor strengthened it by so many analogies, nor applied it in such a variety of specious ways. And, in addition, this system has the merit of being founded upon the very instinct which seems most entitled to respect. I do not hesitate to say, that, if Smith cannot maintain the system of instinct, its defence must be hopeless.

To resume, then; the method by which I shall be governed in this examination of Smith's system, is as follows: — I shall inquire, first, what rule or principle

*Rule :-*  
*Time :-*  
*end :-*  
it recognizes for moral estimation; secondly, what motive it supposes us to be impelled by, when we act conformably to this rule; thirdly, and lastly, what end it assigns to human conduct in the present life. I shall then take up its various answers on these different points, determine whether they are consistent and admissible in themselves, and then compare them with the real facts. Let us now proceed to the first point proposed.

Our moral judgments extend to two classes of actions — those performed by other beings, those performed by ourselves. We determine the character of these acts, and pronounce them good or bad, by means of some principle. What, in Smith's opinion, is this principle?

Our judgments upon acts, according to this philosopher, are only the consequence of those passed upon the affections and sensible emotions which produce them. Sensible affections are, in his opinion, the peculiar and direct objects of moral estimation, which is limited to these affections when they issue in no acts, and extends to acts when the affections are followed out. Now, before we can estimate the moral worth of an affection, we must contemplate it under two points of view; first, with reference to its exciting cause; next, to the effects which it is fitted to produce. Considered in relation to its cause, it may be proper or improper; considered in relation to its tendency, it may have merit or demerit. Propriety, then, and impropriety, merit and demerit, are the moral properties by which affections, and consequently acts, may be estimated. By what principle or rule do

we judge whether an affection is proper or improper on the one side, and has merit or demerit on the other? Such is the question to be determined. If we can discover this principle, from which, according to Smith, this twofold judgment is derived, we shall have discovered the principle given by his system for the moral estimation of actions; because, to determine the moral quality of affections, or of acts, is, in his opinion, the same thing. Let us inquire, then, what this principle is, by which we judge our own acts and the acts of others.

Our manner of judging of the propriety or impropriety of the emotions of others is as follows:—To a certain degree, the impartial spectator experiences, through sympathy, the emotion he beholds; and, as he can approve only so far as he shares an emotion, the degree of his sympathy determines how far he will consider and pronounce it proper; in proportion as it is manifested by the person who feels it, in a stronger or weaker degree than this sympathy, will it be considered too weak or too strong, and, consequently, disapproved as improper. For instance, a man receives a blow, and gives signs of pain: I, as witness of his sufferings, am aroused to sympathy, and partake his feeling; but, in me, this sympathetic emotion rises only to a certain height; if the original subject of the emotion manifests it in a stronger degree than this, it seems to me improper; but if in a similar degree, then it seems to me proper. This common example will serve to indicate the principle of all our judgments of propriety and impropriety, both of the dispositions and acts of others.

Affections will differ from each other in regard to their propriety or impropriety; in the benevolent affections, for example, the spectator may participate in the highest possible degree, while there are others in which he cannot share at all, such as envy, and other malevolent feelings. These latter, therefore, are radically improper, as well as all acts which emanate from them; the expression of them must be entirely suppressed, and on no account must they be allowed to influence our conduct. Between these two extremes may be ranked the various emotions of which our sensibility is susceptible.

Such is the rule by which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of other beings; and, as you see, it is nothing else than the sympathetic emotion of an impartial spectator. The degree of the sympathy determines the degree of the propriety or impropriety of all affections, and, consequently, of all acts, in which they issue. Let us pass now to the consideration of merit and demerit.

The tendency of emotions may be beneficial or injurious. In the first case, they excite in their object gratitude; in the second, resentment. I, as an impartial spectator, am impelled to share in the feelings which I see exhibited. I am animated, therefore, at once, by the benevolent or malevolent disposition of the agent, and by the gratitude or resentment of the object. Well: according to Smith, when the impartial spectator sympathizes entirely and unreservedly with the feelings of the object of these dispositions, he participates in them, and approves them, and therefore adopts them altogether. His judgment is, then, that

the affection of the agent is deserving of recompense in the one case, and of punishment in the other; for what is gratitude except the desire of rendering good for good? or resentment, except the desire of rendering evil for evil? Such, then, is the origin and true nature of the judgment of merit and demerit.

But in what cases does the impartial spectator sympathize entirely with the gratitude or resentment of the object? He sympathizes entirely with the gratitude of the object, when he also sympathizes entirely with the affection of the agent—that is to say, when he judges it to be proper; and he sympathizes entirely with the resentment of the object, when he cannot sympathize at all with the affection of the agent—that is to say, when he judges it to be improper. On this twofold condition does the impartial spectator sympathize entirely with the gratitude or resentment of the one party, and, in consequence, judge that the dispositions of the other have merit or demerit.

Hence, gentlemen, you see that it is the sympathy of the spectator which determines the merit or demerit of emotions and acts, just as it determines their propriety or impropriety. When is an affection, and the action emanating from it, and the agent experiencing it, judged by me to be deserving of punishment or reward? It is when I partake entirely of the gratitude or resentment which the affection inspires in the person who is its object. And when is sympathy thus perfect? It is when I participate fully in the benevolent emotions of the agent, and feel nothing of his malevolence. It is sympathy, then,

that instinctively determines for me, the impartial spectator, the merit and demerit, as it does the propriety and impropriety of sentiments, actions, and agents. Here, then, according to this system, is the principle of all our judgments of other beings. And now let us inquire what is the principle by which we judge of ourselves.

With regard to our own emotions, and, consequently, our actions, and ourselves, we are capable of judging, as we judge in the case of others; that is to say, we form estimates of them, under the twofold aspect of propriety and impropriety, of merit and demerit. What is the nature of this phenomenon, and what is the principle of these judgments? Let us observe the explanation which the system gives.

Smith maintains that I can judge of my own affections and actions only by placing myself in the situation of an impartial spectator, and by regarding them from his point of view. Without this mental process, which would be impossible, of course, for a solitary man, we should never pass moral judgments upon ourselves. When I am animated, therefore, with any emotion, and wish to determine its propriety or impropriety, its merit or demerit, this is what I do — I place myself in the situation of an impartial spectator, and, with the power which I have of entering into the feeling of others, I feel, at sight of this sentiment, precisely as an impartial spectator would himself. I am able, therefore, to judge of its moral quality exactly as others would judge, and as I should myself judge, if the sentiment were displayed by another, only with greater precision, because my

knowledge is more accurate, both of the sentiment itself, of its relation to its cause, and of its actual tendency.

Smith does not deny, that when emotions are strong, it is difficult, at the moment, to contemplate them impartially, and thus sympathize with them. But this only shows, that, in such cases, we judge amiss, and it still remains true, that this operation of mind is necessary for a correct judgment; and a strong proof of this is, that we never form as just an estimate of our affections, as in moments when we are not under their influence; or, in other words, when there is no obstacle to my thus placing myself in the situation of a spectator.

Thus, gentlemen, it appears, that the system is consistent with itself; and that the principle, by which we determine the moral quality of our own acts, is the same as that by which we judge of the acts of our fellow-beings. In both cases, it is the sympathetic emotion of the impartial spectator that decides. The only difference between the two cases is, that, in the first, the sympathy is felt immediately, while in the second, it is awakened only by an indirect operation of mind.

One other point remains to be mentioned, to complete a fair and full analysis of Smith's system. Smith asserts that an experience of the judgments passed upon others, and expressed by them, gradually teach us to know what affections are proper or improper, and have merit or demerit. Hence arise general rules, which impress themselves on our memories, and become those laws of morality which are so

often considered primitive in our nature, but which really are only generalizations from particular judgments of the instinct of sympathy. Now, when these rules, resulting from experience, are once established in our minds, it often happens that we pass judgments without regard to sympathy; and thus our mode of moral estimation, originally instinctive, becomes reasonable. Such is the fact, and you can comprehend it perfectly. What, in such cases, is the principle of moral qualification? Is it altered? By no means; for these rules are only the expression of emotions experienced by the impartial spectator, and have no other authority than his sympathy. It is the emotion of the impartial spectator, which, in this case, as in all others, judges and decides.

In every possible application, then, the system is consistent, and its answer is always the same, whether we judge of our own affections or of the affections of other beings, — whether we judge instinctively or by rules, — whether we consider acts in the light of their propriety or impropriety, their merit or demerit; the mode of moral appreciation remains the same, the system reiterates its principle, and asserts that its rule of the sympathy of the impartial spectator is a sufficient test for moral judgments. Such is the exact answer of Smith's system to the first question proposed.

And now, gentlemen, this rule of moral qualification being fully determined and brought to light, we are prepared to judge of its correctness, and appreciate the truth of the system which is based in part upon it. This must be our next step.



The first difficulty presented by this rule is, that it cannot be easily comprehended. I perfectly understand that the supposed spectator may feel sympathy; but I cannot explain the impartiality, which Smith requires. What kind of impartiality is it that he speaks of? Evidently, it is not an impartiality of the judgment; for reason must not be allowed to enter into moral estimates, or they will no longer emanate from simple sympathy, and the system is destroyed. When I see a man moved by some affection, I feel for him, according to Smith, an instinctive sympathy, by which, and by which alone, I judge of his conduct; intellect has nothing to do with the forming of this decision. By the impartiality of the spectator, then, cannot be meant the impartiality of reason, for this has nothing to do with the moral estimation of the act. We are compelled, therefore, to understand the expression as applying solely to sympathy. And here the difficulty presents itself—How shall we comprehend this expression? What interpretation shall we put upon the word? What means the impartiality of an instinct? We speak of a man as impartial; but when is he so? Only when he exercises judgment. Suppose the faculty of judgment suppressed, and the word means nothing. Impartiality is possible only where there is judgment; and when we say that judgment is impartial, our idea is precisely this—that it is influenced by no passion. Why can I not be impartial in regard to a friend? Because sympathy biases my judgment in his favor. And I cannot be impartial in regard to an enemy, for an opposite reason. It becomes all the more difficult to compre-

hend what is meant by the impartiality of sympathy, because, in the common acceptation of words, it is the absence of sympathy that constitutes impartiality. And let no one suppose that this objection consists in a mere play upon words; this error in expression actually betrays the error of the principle. Undoubtedly we may make instinct our rule of moral judgment; but we cannot, without abjuring good sense, adopt, as the law for conduct, the impulses of any thing so essentially capricious; we must make choice, then, among these impulses, and admit the influence of some, while we reject that of others; in other words, we are compelled to regulate this rule. And it is in this attempt that we are led to conceive this idea of the impartiality of instinct, or some other similar idea, such as cannot be correctly expressed, for the reason that it seeks to represent what has really no existence. It is because this system does violence to the nature of things, that it cannot be described without doing violence to language.

But let us overlook this objection, and pass to an examination of Smith's rule for moral estimates. And I assert that this rule is one which is peculiarly fluctuating and unsettled, and, consequently, that it can be determined only with great difficulty.

Let me suppose myself in the presence of a great number of persons of different ages, sexes, and professions; and, to fulfil as far as possible the condition of impartiality required, let me suppose, in addition, that I am a perfect stranger to them, and that there is no connection whatever between us, of friendship, of interest, or of any other kind; and now let me

manifest, in the presence of these spectators, some emotion; what will be the consequence? These various sensibilities will sympathize with me in very different degrees. Lively sensibilities will partake vividly of my emotions — cold ones but feebly; minds preoccupied will feel nothing, while others, which are attentive, may be profoundly touched; between the emotions of the men and women, of the young and old, of the man of the world and the peasant, of the merchant and the soldier, of one who has a sad and another a joyous temperament, there will inevitably be infinite shades of difference; in a word, circumstances whose number cannot be counted, nor whose influence estimated, will modify the sympathy which my emotion excites. Which of these kinds of sympathy shall be my rule, which shall I select as a test of the propriety or impropriety of my feeling? Shall I adopt the sympathy of this or that particular person? or shall I take the mean of all the sympathies? But why should I adopt this mean? or how shall I determine what it is, among so many which are unknown and not to be appreciated? And how, then, can I determine, according to the doctrine of Smith, whether my emotion is proper or improper?

But now let me change my position; let me in turn become spectator of another's emotions. This morning, I should have entered into his feelings more than I do now; this evening I shall share them less; if I am hungry, I shall be indifferent; if I have dined, I shall be complaisant; my mind is full, perhaps, of philosophy, or of business, and I pay no heed; I am in an imaginative mood, and I am

affected even to tears. Which, now, of these feelings of sympathy, shall I select for my test of moral appreciation? Even should I be able to fix upon my rule, yet age, sickness, a thousand circumstances, may enter in to make me change my rule, and plunge me in uncertainty. And if I, a single spectator, and distinctly conscious of my own emotions, find it difficult, in my judgments of others, to decide upon the rule of impartial sympathy in my mind, how shall I, when called to judge myself, select such a rule from the infinitely diverse, impartial sympathies, not only of society around me, but, as Smith demands, of the human race at large? How can you expect that I should identify myself with the men of all places and times, and draw from feelings so various and mutable, and which often I cannot know, that rule of the *mean* of sympathies needed for the moral appreciation of my own sentiments and acts? Assuredly, to subject us to such conditions in acquiring a rule by which to judge and act, is to make morality impossible.

But yet more is to be said, gentlemen: not only is the rule a mutable one, and, therefore, hard to be determined, but, even supposing it known and fixed, it is still, as even Smith himself acknowledges, inadequate; for, as I have already said in my exposition of the system, cases will and must arise, in which an upright man will feel that in acting in a certain way he does right, and yet that, far from obtaining the sympathy of his fellow-beings, his conduct will excite their antipathy. If he is acting in some public capacity, he may, indeed, hope to receive

from the justice of history the sympathy of after ages; but, as to his contemporaries, he is sure of losing the sympathy, not only of a few persons, but of his whole nation. Smith has the candor to acknowledge that such cases may arise, and the fairness to confess that a man is then bound to follow the right and despise public opinion. But how can he do this without denying his system, and abjuring his rule of moral appreciation? Much as we may admire the ingenuity with which he has attempted to escape from this dilemma, it is impossible not to see that his efforts are fruitless, and that his theory is wrecked upon this difficulty. You shall judge.

I have already told you, that when we are deliberating as to the conduct which it is right, under certain circumstances, to pursue, we have, in the opinion of Smith, but one means of deciding; and that is, to place ourselves in the situation of an impartial spectator, and allow our minds to be affected with his emotions; for his sentiment is not merely the true test, but it is the only one by which we can estimate our acts. Now, who is this impartial spectator? Is it John or Peter? No! but an abstract spectator, who has neither the prejudices of the one nor the weaknesses of the other, and who sees correctly and soundly, precisely because he is abstract. It is in the presence of this abstract spectator, who is another *me*, separate from the impassioned *me*, and its judge, that, in my deepest consciousness, I deliberate, decide, and act. Not only is this spectator no particular man, but he does not even represent any portion of society — no age nor sex, no village nor city, no nation nor

era; he represents humanity—he represents God. The sentiments of this secret witness, whose impartiality is so perfect, give us the true principle of moral estimation, and the true rule for conduct.

Assuredly, gentlemen, this would be giving a most ingenious turn to his principle, were it nothing more; but it is, in fact, doing something very different; it is introducing an entirely new view, into which Smith has unconsciously entered, without perceiving that he was not led into it by setting out from his own principle, and that he cannot return from it to his principle again.

How, according to Smith's system, do I become acquainted with the moral worth of actions? By a knowledge of the sentiments of others; their approbation is my rule; and, as this depends upon their sympathy, their sympathy is my rule; to form a judgment, therefore, I must place myself in their situation, and strive to enter into their feelings; and so truly is this, according to Smith, the only rule for estimating sentiments and acts, that if I was alone in the world, or cast away on a desert island, I could not pass judgment upon my acts or sentiments, and they would have no moral character in my eyes. Such, unquestionably, is the doctrine of Smith; and all his illustrations confirm it. Now, what is it that I do, when, for the sentiments of actual spectators, I substitute those of an abstract spectator? Most evidently, gentlemen, I not only abandon the rule of sympathy, and adopt another in its place, but I even deny this rule, and pronounce it false, and condemn it; for this abstract spectator does not exist, and never existed;

and his sentiments, therefore, have no reality, and are wholly fictitious. It is no longer by the sentiments of others that I judge, but by my own. The sentiments of others I reject wholly, and prefer my own; this abstract spectator is one of my own creation; he has no existence in the world without; he is neither a real individual, nor a combination of real individuals; he is an emanation from my own sentiments. I judge, then, by my own sentiments, which, according to this system, are incapable of judgment, the sentiments of others, which, as it teaches, are the only judge; I reverse the system so far as it can be reversed; I make supreme the rule which it pronounces false, and reject the rule which it approves; I enter into another world and another system — a world and system where sympathy is no longer regarded, and where the sentiments of others, so far from being the test for mine, are judged by mine.

In this fiction of an impartial spectator, then, Smith recognizes implicitly that there is a law, superior to that of sympathy; for, by the sentiments of this abstract spectator, which sympathy did not communicate, and which can only be my own, I form moral estimates of the sympathies of other beings, and condemn them, and look only to those eternal laws of right and wrong which conscience and reason reveal.

In truth, gentlemen, it is quite plain that this abstract spectator, imagined by Smith, is nothing else than reason, judging, in the name of order, and of the immutable nature of things, the mutable and blind decisions of men. It is a consciousness of the reality

of this supreme faculty, that embarrasses Smith in the exposition of his system; and he has pictured to himself this faculty, which judges of our own and others' acts, and weighs, impartially, the decisions of others' sympathy for us, and our sympathy for them, under the image of an abstract spectator, because, of all symbols by which conscience can be represented, this is the one which seems most in harmony with his fundamental hypothesis, that we can judge of our own actions only by entering into the feelings of others towards us. Instead of the words *conscience*, or *reason*, therefore, he makes use of the expression *abstract spectator*; in his strong prepossession in favor of his system, he believes that it is by representing to ourselves the sentiments of this imaginary being, that we are able to pass judgment upon our acts; and he is quite unaware, that, in so doing, he contradicts his assertion that a solitary man would form no moral estimates; for, in the most desert island, this abstract spectator would still be our companion, and enable us to judge of our acts, our sentiments, ourselves.

Thus have I shown, as I believe, that the rule of sympathy is one which it is difficult to comprehend; that it is mutable; and, lastly, that it is an inadequate one. And now I will submit it to a yet severer test: let it be granted, for the moment, that it is clear, fixed, and applicable to every case; are these such qualities as are sufficient to secure for it our respect? By no means. These merits must pass for nothing, if it is not the real rule—the true rule of moral judgments. For what is it that we seek in ethical



science? Not imaginary rules, which may explain our moral judgments, but those real rules which do actually determine them. Consciousness alone can decide this point. Smith has pretended to describe the manner by which we estimate our own and others' acts, and consciousness must decide whether this is the way in which we really judge. To consciousness, then, let us appeal.

Are we conscious, then, when we are to judge of the acts of others, that we first give loose to our sensibility, and observe how far it sympathizes with the sentiments by which they are animated, and then determine, from the nature and degree of our own emotions, taken as a rule, what judgments we shall pass? For my part, gentlemen, I say, that, so far from being conscious of such a process of mind, we are even conscious of an opposite one. When I wish to judge impartially of the conduct of my fellow-beings, I make it my first care, if I feel that it excites me, to stifle my emotions and forget them. And why? Because thus I secure the impartiality of my judgment. Singular proceeding indeed, if it is my sensibility which should be the judge! It is not at the moment when I behold some exhibition of strong passion, that I feel most capable of appreciating its propriety or justice; for then my sensibility overpowers me; emotions of sympathy or antipathy possess my mind; and I am perfectly aware that the feeling disturbs my judgment, and destroys its proper freedom and clearness of view. And why should it not be so in regard to moral judgments, when we know that it is in regard to judgments of taste?

When an accomplished reader recites a piece of poetry, if I wish to judge of its beauty, I must not yield to the impression produced by the reading, or I shall be a prey to the emotion which the skilful declamation has awakened; I must await the publication of the piece, and peruse it coolly; and then shall I be competent to form an impartial judgment. Far, then, from being conscious of the facts described by Smith, when I judge of the acts of my fellow-beings, I have a distinct consciousness of quite opposite facts, which make known a wholly different rule of moral appreciation.

His description is equally wanting in fidelity, in relation to judgments on our own acts; although, in this case, I do recognize a phenomenon which may explain, though it cannot justify, his opinion. When I am animated with some emotion, and desire, before yielding to its influence, to determine its character, I often distrust my own judgment; and, if the emotion is very strong, I feel distinctly that my judgment is not in a condition to be impartial. It is fully capable in itself of appreciating the moral good or evil of an affection, and of distinguishing a right from a wrong action; this I am perfectly aware of, and am not anxious on that account; my only fear is, that, in the present instance, it is not in a condition to be impartial. What shall I do, then? I appeal to the sentiments of other men; I place myself in the situation of an indifferent person, and strive to imagine what his opinion would be of the emotion which I experience, and the act to which it impels me. But why this appeal to the sentiments

of a fellow-being, and this effort to enter into them? It is because I believe that, as regards this emotion and act, the judgment of another is freer than mine from the influence of such sentiments as may prevent a correct moral estimate. It is from a regard to that impartiality of which his judgment is capable, while mine is not, that I wish to consult his opinion; and not at all because I consider his sympathy as the true and only rule of the morality of my affections and conduct; for I feel, all the while, that this rule, which I believe him to possess, exists also in my own mind, and it is not this, therefore, which I seek; I seek only an impartial application of this rule.

Such, according to my understanding of our sentiments and acts, is the only fact that has any analogy with Smith's ideas, and from this, perhaps, his system took its origin; but Smith has altered the real nature of the fact, by transforming into the rule of our judgments of ourselves what is merely a means of controlling them. And the proof that this recourse to the sympathy of others is nothing more, is the fact, that, in numerous cases, there is no such recourse; and that, even when it does take place, we often do not follow the opinions of other men, but prefer our own, as Smith himself acknowledges.

Consciousness, therefore, contradicts Smith's system, and does not recognize, in his pretended rule of moral appreciation, the rule which actually dictates our judgments. It is not true that we seek in our own sensibility the judgments which we pass upon others; and neither is it true that we seek in the opinions of others the principle of moral estimation

for our own sentiments and conduct. As to the former point, the rules of moral appreciation are to be found in ourselves; and, as to the second, they consist not in emotions of sympathy, but in conceptions of reason. It is true that Smith may say, in answer, that he recognizes these inward laws, and gives a perfectly clear explanation of their origin. But consciousness cannot confound the rules which he acknowledges with those of morality, nor the decisions of sympathy, of which they are the generalization, with the true moral judgments given by reason. Consciousness does not admit that the true laws of morality emanate from the successive decisions of sympathy upon the acts and sentiments of ourselves and others reciprocally; and it perceives that, if there is any thing in the code of sympathy which is more than a generalization of the opinions of those about us, it can still be a rule of conduct for vain and ambitious men only, but never for a good man.

I must ask your attention for a moment longer, while I examine Smith's principle of moral qualification under another point of view, and inquire what is its authority.

The ethical philosopher has something more to do than to point out a rule of moral estimation; this rule must be shown also to have a moral authority over the will—an authority which is undeniable, and such as can explain the moral facts of human nature, and the moral ideas which we find in human intelligence; and as among these ideas are duty, right, obligation, all of which imply the idea of law, this principle must have the character of a law, and impose

obligations, and thus give obedience the character, not of propriety merely, but of duty. Let us see whether Smith's principle fulfils these conditions.

When I examine the authority of Smith's moral rule, I find that it represents only the general law of an instinct. In all possible cases, if you generalize and reduce to distinct decisions what the sympathy of an impartial spectator declares, you will have, according to this system, the laws of moral conduct. And these moral laws have no other authority than that of an instinct of sympathy. What is this instinct of sympathy? Is it our only instinct? No: it is one only of several. This system elevates, then, the impulses of one particular instinct into being the laws of morality. But whence does this instinct derive its marvellous power of communicating to its impulses the character of a law, with all its peculiar authority and supremacy? If I ask Smith, he gives me no reply. If I examine human nature, I find no explanation of this wonderful prerogative. I have an instinct of sympathy, as I distinctly recognize; I agree that this instinct is developed according to certain laws; I do not deny that it influences my will as a motive; but I have a multitude of other instincts also—instincts which are purely personal—the instinct of love, the instinct of imitation, the instinct of knowing, the instinct of acting—all of which are phenomena of a similar nature. Whence comes, then, the peculiar right and power of sympathy? Whence does it derive its title? By what process do its impulses become rules by which are to be judged, approved, condemned, the impulses of all

other instincts? and not only these, but the acts of all our faculties—even those of intellect and reason? If this mysterious privilege of sympathy cannot be explained, at least I ask whether it is one which we feel and are conscious of—whether these rules of sympathy do speak to us with the tone of command—whether, in a word, although ignorant of the source of their power, we are yet aware that they do exert this right of obligation.

It is wonderful to observe, gentlemen, by what gradual substitutions of equivalent expressions, and by what insensible transitions, Smith attempts to elevate the impulses of sympathy into the condition of rules, and by which he finally succeeds in communicating to them some appearance of this character. We must follow the series of these ingenious sophisms, if we would comprehend his system, and lay bare all its imperfections.

Smith's mode of reasoning is as follows:—How am I affected by the exhibition of another's emotions? Sympathy is awakened, and either I participate in them, or I do not. When do I approve a sentiment? When I participate in it. Approbation, then, is a consequence of sympathy; and, in all its degrees, is only a faithful transcript of the emotions of sympathy. To say that I approve a sentiment, is to say that I participate in it; and to say that I participate in it, is to say that I approve it; and reciprocally to say that I do not approve it, is to say that I do not participate in it. What can be simpler or more proper than to substitute the word *approve*, therefore, for that of *participate*? Well, then, says Smith,

what is morally good? Is it not that which we ap-  
prove? And what ought we to do? Surely that  
which is good. Can any thing be more plain, more  
natural? Will any one deny, that to *approve* and to  
*pronounce good* are the same things, or that that *ought*  
to be done which is *good*? How plausible are such  
propositions! Observe now the conclusion; that  
which *ought* to be done is precisely what impartial  
sympathy approves; the instinctive emotions of sym-  
pathy, therefore, are the laws of human conduct, and  
the rules of morality; such is the strict consequence  
of the preceding reasonings.

I trust that you already perceive the sophistry of  
such an induction; it consists in pronouncing things  
to be equivalent which are not so. Let us expose,  
successively, these false equations; the system itself  
must bear the blame.

To participate in the sentiment of another being,  
is simply, according to Smith's system, to feel an  
emotion equal to that which he experiences: the  
phenomenon is purely a sensible one. To approve  
this sentiment, is, in the language of ethics, to con-  
sider it proper, good, lawful: this is a purely intellect-  
ual fact. Are these two things identical? Not at  
all. A judgment is a judgment; an emotion is an  
emotion; but an emotion is no more a judgment  
than a sensation is an idea. There is no more reason  
for identifying these two things than there is for  
declaring them equal. Is the emotion, then, of such  
a nature, that, when presented to the view of reason,  
the judgment is an immediate consequence? In other  
words, do I approve every emotion which I feel to be

equal to yours? Whence comes the necessity of any such consequence? I can see none, and facts contradict it. I share a thousand emotions, without morally approving or disapproving them; I condemn many emotions which I share; and, on the other hand, I approve many things which are neither emotions nor the result of emotions; and I even approve emotions which I not only do not participate in, but which are absolutely displeasing to me. There is no reason whatever, therefore, for pronouncing the sensible fact of sympathy to be equal to the rational fact of approbation. Any equality which there is between them, is only in appearance, and the appearance consists wholly in words. So much for the first sophism.

Our author proceeds to say, that, when I approve an emotion, I feel it to be good; to which I answer, This is not the way in which the human mind reasons; from the goodness of the act we are led to approve it, but not from our approbation to pronounce it good. For what is it that merits approbation? It is that which is good; but that is not necessarily good which is approved. Before we can infer the goodness of an act, as a conclusion, from the fact of its being approved, it must be proved that the approbation is merited, which is saying, in other words, that it is good; this shows that the approbation is a consequence of an antecedent perception of goodness. Smith reverses this order of nature, for he makes the approbation the sign and proof of the goodness. Instead of the true equation between that which is good and that which merits approbation, he sub-



stitutes a false equation between that which is approved and that which is good. This is the second sophism.

Once possessed of the word *good*, Smith dashes on with full sails, and without difficulty arrives at the idea of obligation; for what is more evident to reason than that that which is good ought to be done, and that which is evil avoided? But what mean such words as these, in a system which preserves nothing of moral good but its name, while it destroys the reality? Obligation is attached, not to words, however, but to things; and the word, which is but an appearance, can produce only an apparent obligation. Such is the third sophism.

And now, gentlemen, our conclusion is, that, in establishing as the principle and rule of moral approbation the emotions of an impartial spectator, Smith has elevated into a law of conduct a fact that is purely sensible and instinctive — a fact possessing no more authority than every other instinctive and sensible fact — and, consequently, possessing none at all. Under whatever disguise, therefore, this fact may be enveloped, and through whatever ingenious transformations it may be made to pass, it is still impossible to communicate to it the character which it wants: there is not, therefore, in the system of Smith, any such thing as a moral law; and it is incompetent to explain our ideas of duty, of right, and all other such ideas as imply the fact of obligation; and if it attempts to do so, it must, necessarily, fall into sophisms, and come to empty conclusions, which vanish when we approach to examine them.

Thus, gentlemen, — and with the consideration of this point I shall close my lecture, — Smith himself is conscious, that, after all his efforts, his principle of moral qualification is still wanting in the character of obligation; and he has been compelled, therefore, to employ one further mode of evasion, which it is well you should be acquainted with, if only to convince you of the power of truth, and to show you what embarrassment systematic minds must feel, and to what sophistries the loftiest genius must descend, in its attempt to endue error with a character which it cannot justly claim.

It is the strict consequence of the system of Smith, that whatever others approve and praise will appear to me good, and whatever they blame and disapprove will appear to me bad; and that the rule of conduct, therefore, is to be sought in the approbation and praise of our fellow-men.

Now, conscience revolts instinctively at this idea of finding a rule for conduct in the opinions of others. There are so many occasions when the opinion of the world must be wrong; the principle subjects our conduct to such a dependence upon the caprices and mutations of opinion; and, finally, it is so often assigned as a motive for conduct, by men who are wholly governed by vanity or ambition, — that a doctrine professing this principle is much better calculated to repel than attract us. Smith himself, indeed, has too much good sense to allow himself to believe or teach that the desire of praise and the fear of censure is the only motive for good men. He is driven, therefore, into finding some means of es-

caping from this consequence of his system; and you shall see how he has attempted to do so.

We cannot, he says, desire to be praised, or fear to be blamed, without desiring to be the legitimate object of praise, and fearing to be the legitimate object of blame. The desire of praise and the fear of blame is succeeded by the desire of being praise-worthy and the fear of being blameworthy; and this latter sentiment soon becomes, in all sensible minds, infinitely the stronger of the two; the other remaining prevalent only in vain and frivolous natures. 12.150

You see, gentlemen, the transition by which Smith endeavors to substitute for the love of praise the love of that which may merit it, and for the fear of blame the fear of that which may deserve it. If the transition was legitimate, the true end and the true rule for good men would be found; for what we should seek or shun is not the praise and blame, which the world so blindly distributes, but the qualities which make us worthy to receive them; and Smith, being a good man, feels and allows it. But he does so by availing himself of the most sophistical and false equivalent expressions.

We can comprehend, as I readily acknowledge, that the desire of praise may create a desire of being the object of praise; but why? It is because these two desires are really only different forms of the same desire; to love praise and to love to be its object are the same thing. The motive of the good man is not to be found in either one or the other; the motive of the good man is the desire of being

-129- the legitimate object of praise, whether he obtains it or not. Between this and the desire of praise there is as wide a difference as possible; for, to have the latter, we need only to know what praise is, and we can gratify it by performing, in any case, the acts which are necessary to obtain it; while, to have the former, we must know what conditions are necessary to make us legitimate objects of praise; and, to gratify it, we must fulfil these conditions. Now, the system of sympathy cannot make us acquainted with these conditions, because it has no other sign or measure of what is worthy and good, than the praise itself. The desire of being the legitimate object of praise is impossible, then, in such a system; and Smith really admits a new principle of moral appreciation, perfectly distinct from that which sympathy gives, and which is the only one that it can give, when he substitutes for the desire of praise the desire of being worthy of it. He saves his system from absurdity only by abandoning its principle, and his pretended equation of the desire of praise and the desire of deserving it is only a sophism.

1 And now let me recapitulate what has been said in this lecture. Smith's rule for moral judgment is one, then, which, in my opinion, it is difficult to comprehend; supposing it to be comprehended, it is so fluctuating a one that we cannot settle it; even  
2 if it were settled, it would yet be inadequate, because  
3 there are cases to which it does not apply; but allow-  
4 ing that it is adequate, it is not the true rule which we are conscious of obeying; and this last idea is confirmed by the fact that it has no authority and

no character of a law, and thus cannot explain the moral facts and ideas of human nature.

Such are the observations which I have felt bound to submit to your attention, in relation to the answer given by the system of sympathy to the first question proposed as a test. They have led me so far, that I am obliged to postpone until the next lecture a consideration of its answers to the other two questions. This is giving a great deal of time to the discussion of a particular system, to be sure; but you will find the criticism so interesting, I trust, as not to complain of its length. And, in my view, the remarks suggested by Smith's system extend to all others which seek in instinct for the laws of morality; and I feel, therefore, that time thus employed is really gained, not lost.

## LECTURE XVIII

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I examined Smith's system, for the purpose of determining what answer it gives to the first of the three questions, which every ethical system is bound to solve; and I described and discussed this answer. I proceed to-day to test this system by the two remaining questions, and to criticise the solution of them.

The first of these two questions is this: What is the motive to which we yield when we act right? Let us first inquire, then, how Smith answers it; and, having determined the motive to which he ascribes the legitimate decisions of will, let us examine its authority, and see how far it explains our moral ideas.

We act well, according to any system, when we practise the different virtues which it recognizes. By inquiring, then, what Smith considers the principal virtues, and seeking to know the motive that impels us to perform them, we shall determine the motive to which we yield in doing right, according to the doctrine of sympathy.

You know that, in Smith's opinion, we judge of acts by the affections which lead to them; and that we judge of the affections themselves under a double point of view; first, in relation to the object calling them forth, in which case they are pronounced proper or improper; and next, in relation to their tendency, in which they are considered as having merit or demerit. Propriety and merit are the two moral qualities, of which affections, and consequently actions, are susceptible; such, in other words, are the two elements of moral good.

To the first of these two qualities of affections correspond, as Smith teaches, two virtues. The effort to restrain within proper limits the manifestation of our affections, constitutes the first of them, which is self-command, the source of all honorable virtues. The opposite effort of elevating our sympathetic emotions as nearly as possible to a level with the original affections of other persons constitutes the second, which is benevolence, the source of all amiable virtues. Both have a common end, which is a harmony of affection. In tempering the violence of our original affections in the first instance, and elevating the tone of our sympathetic affections in the second, we seek the same result, which is to bring our sensibility into unison with that of our fellow-beings; in both cases, we anticipate their emotions, and, in this mutual drawing near of affection, meet them half-way. Self command and benevolence—such are the two virtues, by the practice of which, in our double capacity of spectator and actor, we impress upon our affections and acts the character of propriety, and realize the

greatest possible degree of harmony between the sentiments of our fellow-beings and our own.

To the second moral quality of affections, merit, two virtues also belong — charity and justice. The repressing of all affections which could produce the ill of others, indignation alone excepted, constitutes justice; the development of affections which tend to increase the good of others, constitutes charity. Charity is the source of all meritorious virtues; justice of all estimable ones; for, as the only end of justice is to prevent wrong, it cannot produce merit, while charity, by multiplying good, makes us the proper object of the gratitude of others, and, consequently, meritorious.

Such, gentlemen, according to Smith, are the four cardinal virtues, into which all others may be resolved. From the practice of these four virtues, results, as this philosopher teaches, all the morality of human conduct. And now, let us inquire, to what motive we, in his opinion, yield, in practising these several virtues.

Virtuous acts, Smith says, are sometimes instinctive, sometimes reasonable. They are instinctive when they spring from the direct impulse of sympathy; they are reasonable when they flow from the rules, which, as we have seen, are the generalizations of these impulses. Let us consider these cases separately.

To what motive do we yield, when we confine, within the bounds of propriety, the expression of an original affection, and when we elevate our sympathetic emotions to a level with the affection of



another? To the instinct of sympathy, answers Smith; that is to say, to the desire which every human being feels of harmonizing, in his affections, sentiments, and dispositions, with those of his fellow-beings. Sympathy is delightful to him who experiences it, and to him who is its object; we are instinctively impelled to give and to seek it; and from this results the instinctive effort which constitutes self-command on the one side, and benevolence on the other.

We yield to the same motive, says Smith, in the instinctive exercise of justice and of charity; but, in this case, it assumes a peculiar form. When I am charitable, I seek not so much the sympathy of others as their gratitude; and when I am just, I seek rather to avoid their resentment than their antipathy. But is not gratitude the strongest sympathy, and resentment the strongest antipathy? In seeking gratitude and avoiding resentment, then, we really are only striving to gain, and dreading to lose, their sympathy. The spontaneous practice of charity and of justice is determined, therefore, by the same motive which produces the other two virtues; that is to say, by the sympathetic instinct, which impels us to seek a harmony between our own sentiments and those of our fellow-beings. The practice of all virtue, then, emanates from this one motive.

You will please to remark one thing, gentlemen; which is, that, according to Smith, this motive is an instinct, and not a result of calculation. We can desire the love, benevolence, and esteem of our kind, from a prospect of the agreeable or useful conse-

quences of such sentiments. Smith denies, however, that it is from such considerations that sympathy makes us desire them. Sympathy seeks them, Smith declares, for their own sake, because they are its proper objects, as food is the object of hunger. In adopting the sympathetic instinct as the motive of virtue, Smith thinks, therefore, that he refers virtue to a disinterested motive; and it is thus that he pretends to establish the fact of disinterestedness in human nature. Without doubt, Smith has good reasons for saying that the sympathetic instinct is not interested; but whether he is justified, therefore, in calling the volitions produced by it disinterested, and in finding in them the type of true disinterestedness, is an altogether different question, to be considered hereafter.

When, instead of being instinctive, the practice of these virtues is reasonable, to what motive do we yield, in the opinion of Smith? To the authority of rules. Whence comes the authority of these rules? From the fact that they represent the conduct by which we may merit the sympathy of our fellow-beings, and avoid their antipathy. These rules are the generalization of particular judgments of the sympathetic instinct; their only merit in our eyes, and sole title to obedience, is, that they indicate the true course of action to be pursued in the satisfaction of our desire for sympathy. This desire, therefore, is the true motive of obedience to these rules. And it is to this we yield in the reasonable, as in the instinctive, practice of virtue.

The result to which we come, then, is, that the

instinctive desire of sympathy is the motive of all virtue, and, consequently, of all right conduct—a motive that influences the will sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, by rules, but always exclusive of other motives. Not only is this the result naturally given by the principle of sympathy, but I now say, in addition, that this result is not altered by the two expedients which, as I showed in my last lecture, Smith has employed to give to his principle an extent to which it has no claim, and to deduce from it consequences which have no connection with it. A few words will suffice to show that this is true.

The first of these expedients is the notion of an abstract spectator. This is the means by which Smith hopes to prove that sympathy is not limited to a knowledge of the conditions necessary for obtaining the sympathy of our countrymen and contemporaries, but that it is competent to make known the conditions upon which we may merit the sympathy of the human race, of present and of future generations, of men enlightened with perfect wisdom and reason. That this hope is futile, and that it is impossible to deduce logically such infallible moral judgments from any generalization of particular estimates of instinctive sympathy, I have, as I think, unanswerably demonstrated in my last lecture. But, whether the instinct of sympathy has a wider or a narrower range, Smith's idea as to the motive of virtue remains unchanged: either he believes that the conditions for obtaining the sympathy of the human race are made known by the instinct of sympathy, or that they are not. In the first case, he is consistent in his belief that

the motive of our volitions in fulfilling these conditions is the desire of sympathy; in the second, he manifests a consciousness that his system is false, and that it is not adequate to explain the rules of morality; and then it is unimportant to inquire what the motive is to which he attributes our obedience; for it is one foreign to the system of sympathy, and it is only the motive to virtue presented by this system that we seek.

The same must be said of Smith's second expedient, by which he endeavors to show that the love of praise, directly emanating from the instinct of sympathy, immediately begets the desire of being praiseworthy; which desire no sooner becomes supreme, than we endeavor to act in such a way as may make us the legitimate objects of approval, even should this conduct awaken their displeasure. Smith has unquestionably failed in this attempt, as well as in the first; but, whether he has or has not proved the justness of attributing this influence to sympathy, the motive assigned remains the same; and again he is exposed to the dilemma, either of sincerely and thoroughly believing that the principle of his system really produces this desire of being praiseworthy, or that it does not. If he allows that sympathy cannot explain this desire, then he is conscious that his principle cannot account for all our acts of will, and he is forced to admit another and independent principle; and thus he destroys his system, acknowledges that it is false, and there is no further need of asking what motive for virtue he adopts. If, on the contrary, he considers that the desire of praise and the desire

of being praiseworthy are equivalent, then, although he may be deceived, he is still consistent in believing that the desire of sympathy is the single motive of all virtuous acts.

Thus, gentlemen, it appears that Smith has not altered, by either of these attempts, the conclusion legitimately to be drawn from his principles; and, therefore, the only motive of all legitimate actions, acknowledged in his system, is seen to be the instinct of sympathy. And now let us inquire what is the authority of this motive, and how far it is adequate to explain our moral ideas.

In absolute truth, the reason why we ought to do good is so included in the very idea of good, that there is no difference between the moral law and the motive which makes obedience to it our duty. But when we substitute a false law of morality for the true one, the authority is no longer recognized in the law itself, and we are obliged to seek it in the motive to which we yield in obeying it. This is precisely what becomes necessary in the system of sympathy. Good, in this system, is that which is conformable to the emotions of an impartial spectator. Such a rule has, as we have already seen, no authority; it remains, then, to be seen whether the authority, which does not reside in the rule, may be found in the motive which influences us when we act in accordance with it. Let us inquire.

What is the desire of sympathy? An instinct. Is this instinct the only one active in human nature? Far from it: I have many other instincts. Are the instincts the only motives by which I am impelled?

No; for I do not always act instinctively : sometimes I am governed by views of interest, sometimes by a sense of order, by a love of truth, or by some other conception of reason. To judge, then, of the authority of the motive of sympathy, I must compare it with these other motives, which also influence my will, and see what is the nature of its superiority. We will begin with the instincts.

In comparing the action of the instinct of sympathy with that of any other personal instinct, I find that, whenever these are brought into opposition, sometimes one, sometimes the other, triumphs; and that the determining cause of this superiority, unless some considerations of reason enter, is always the greater energy which either may at the moment possess. Experience proves, then, that, in its impulsive force, the instinct of sympathy is exactly equal to all other instincts. But what influence has an instinct over my will, except this power of impulse? and on what ground can it be considered entitled to supreme sway, except that of its energy—an energy of which the pleasure following its gratification must always be the essential element? This energy—which is the only claim of superiority, then, that the sympathetic instinct can possess—sympathy itself, then, cannot communicate.

Its superiority must come, then, from a judgment of reason, declaring its title to be better than that of any other instinct. But, if reason thus decides, it is by means of some rule foreign from, and higher than, instinct; and, therefore, if, governed by this judgment, we prefer the inspirations of instinctive

sympathy to all other impulses, our motive is no longer derived from instinct, but from this higher rule; that is to say, from reason; but this the system of sympathy cannot admit. According to this system, then, the instinct of sympathy, both by right and in fact, is neither more nor less than equal to every other instinct, and can have no real title to superiority.

And now let us compare this sympathetic instinct with self-love. Is its superiority here manifest? Far from it. As a matter of fact, when the instincts of sympathy and of interest well understood come in conflict, the former yields at least as often as it triumphs, and, as a matter of right, the superiority of interest well understood is clear. Whenever these motives clash, one of two things happens: either self-love approves or disapproves the instinct of sympathy; approving when it sees that there will be a gain in yielding the will to the sympathetic impulse, and disapproving when it anticipates suffering as a consequence of so doing. In the first case, our volition is determined by two coöperating motives; and far from feeling that the motive of interest is secondary, we recognize it, on the contrary, as the principal one, at least so long as the instinct acts unaided, and derives no support from a motive of reason. In the second case, sometimes the instinct, sometimes the judgment triumphs; but, unless the instinct is directed by some rational motive, we always feel, in yielding to it, that we should act more wisely in obeying the dictate of self-interest. The instinct of sympathy, therefore, far from appearing to be superior to self-love, is acknowledged by us to be

inferior; and this superiority of the motive of interest is owing to its character of being rational: on this ground, and on this ground alone, does it legitimately rule over the instinctive impulse; and if at any time the sympathetic tendencies of our nature appear to have the nobler character, it is communicated to them by a motive, also rational though yet higher — the moral motive.

*Instinct  
Governing  
Motive*  
Is there any need, now, of attempting to show, that a superiority of the instinct of sympathy over the disinterested motives of reason is a yet more chimerical supposition? Influenced by these motives, by the love of order, for example, reason sometimes approves, sometimes disapproves the impulses of sympathy; for it is an error to think that its approbation is uniform; there may be, and are, cases in which reason decides that we ought to resist our best sympathies, even that sweetest and most sacred of all, the love of a parent to a child. In cases where it approves, we obey two motives; and far from the instinct seeming to us to be the principal, it is the rational motive, which always appears to us to wear this character of superiority. The same is true of cases where reason condemns the instinct; for, then, whether we do or do not yield to the impulse, we still recognize that we ought to obey the judgment.

Whether we compare, therefore, the action of the instinct of sympathy with that of other instincts, or with that of either the selfish or disinterested motives of reason, we can find no signs of its superiority; it has no more authority than every other instinct, and it has far less than the rational motives. If,



then, this is the motive to which we really ought to yield, no reason appears why we should do so; and the authority, which we could not find in the idea of good as given by the system of sympathy, is no more to be found in the motive, which, according to this system, impels us to right conduct.

This Smith seems to have thought himself, and his efforts to establish the authority of the instinct of sympathy are manifest. Unfortunately, they led only to evident paralogisms. Instead of proving that the instinct of sympathy is the true moral motive, he describes the characteristics of this moral motive, and then gratuitously attributes them to the instinct of sympathy; thus proving, to be sure, that, if the instinct had these characteristics, it would be the moral motive, but forgetting altogether the evidence that it possesses them.

No one has better described than Smith the supreme sway of the moral motive over the appetites and instincts, and all the faculties of our nature; and the passages in which he establishes this point are perfectly true as well as beautiful. Whatever may be our idea of the moral faculty, to it always belongs, says Smith, the direction of our conduct, and, consequently, the superintendence of all our faculties, passions, and appetites. It is false, that the moral faculty is like our other faculties, having no more right than they to prescribe laws. No other faculty passes judgment upon its kindred faculties; love does not judge resentment, nor resentment love; these two faculties may be in opposition, but they neither approve nor disapprove each other; it is the special function of

Special  
function  
of the moral  
faculty

the moral faculty, on the contrary, to judge, approve, and censure the other faculties; it is a sense, of which all other principles of our nature are the appropriate object. Each sense is sovereign judge as to its object; there is no appeal, in a question of color, from the eye to the ear, nor from the ear to the eye, in a question of sound; that which is pleasing to the eye is beautiful, to the taste sweet, to the ear harmonious; and the peculiarity of the moral faculty is a power of judging of the degree in which the ear should be charmed, the eye delighted, the taste gratified — of the degree, in other words, in which it is proper, meritorious, good, that either of our faculties should be restrained. The words *good, bad, just, unjust, merit, demerit, propriety, impropriety*, express what is pleasing or displeasing to this faculty; it is, therefore, the governing power in our nature. Its laws are real laws, in the true acceptation of that word; for they regulate the right acts of free agents, and by their sanctions administer reward and punishment; and so far is this word *laws* from having a just application to our faculties of seeing, hearing, moving, and all our other faculties, that, when we speak of their laws of action, we mean to signify that they operate in a necessary way.

Unquestionably this is perfectly true. But, in the first place, Smith has not seen, that this subordination of all our faculties is not peculiar to the moral motive, but may equally belong to every motive and impulse. If we propose, as the supreme end of conduct, the sympathy of others, we shall regulate ac-

cordingly all our appetites, instincts, and faculties, and make them subordinate to this end. We shall do the same if we propose, as our end, self-interest, literary reputation, or any other end. It is not, then, the special character of the moral faculty, that it subjects to its rule, as supreme, the action of our other faculties; every other faculty may do this, and in an equal degree, whenever it is made the ruling motive of conduct. The special characteristic of the moral motive — and this is the second point which Smith has overlooked — is that, among all possible motives for action, it alone can be obligatory, and for this reason — that, though other motives may present different ends to be pursued, the moral motive alone presents, as an end, that which ought to be done, which is the true end of human life, and which is seen by us to be legitimate and sacred in itself. This is what distinguishes the moral motive from all others. Smith may prove, to be sure, that, in taking as a rule for conduct the inspirations of the instinct of sympathy, we obey a principle by which we may intelligently control the action of all our natural faculties; but the same thing might be proved of every other principle of conduct; and it by no means follows that this principle and the moral principle are identical. Smith does not prove exactly, what it was necessary he should prove to establish this identity, that this instinct is obligatory, and that the end to which it impels us is legitimate and sacred in itself. If he had proved this, the authority of the instinct of sympathy would have been no longer doubtful;

*Obligatory*  
*the proper*  
*distinguishing*  
*feature*

but this cannot be proved of any faculty except the moral one, for it is true of this motive alone.

Smith believes that he recognizes the moral motive in the instinct of sympathy, for this additional reason, that it renders us impartial. If we should hear, he says, that the empire of China was swallowed up, we should be less affected than by the loss of a finger. How can the partiality of these judgments be remedied? By sympathy. When we place ourselves in the situation of an impartial spectator, each event assumes its relative value, and we learn to estimate it, not by the rule of self-love, but by that of justice. It would be easy to demonstrate, that sympathy, acting by itself, would be without power to prevent this preponderance of our selfishness. But even if I admit this, the reasoning of Smith would still be a paralogism. Interest, well understood, produces some of the effects of the moral motive. Does it follow from this that it is the moral motive? The point to be proved is not that the instinct of sympathy acts *like* the moral motive, but that it *is* the moral motive. Now, how *can* the moral motive be recognized? By its authority. Among all possible motives, the moral motive alone appears to us as one that *ought* to govern our conduct. It is when recognized by this sign, that we are able to judge of its tendencies; and it is because these tendencies are those of the moral motive, that they seem to us legitimate. But, first, to say that certain tendencies are legitimate, and, then, because a motive appears to have these tenden-

cies, to conclude that it is the moral motive, is a pure paralogism.

Thus, as you see, gentlemen, we seek in vain for any right, possessed by the instinct of sympathy, of controlling our conduct; there is none to be found; and this is equally true of all other instincts. In refuting the system of Smith, I refute, therefore, every other moral system, which seeks in instinct for the regulating principle of volition; and this is my apology for such a lengthened discussion.

If the motive of sympathy has no authority, it is plain that it cannot explain our moral ideas, for each of them implies a motive of obligation. Smith's system, indeed, may employ, in a certain sense, the words which represent these ideas; but it can do so only by altering the meaning which they have in common acceptance. Your attention has already been directed to this change of signification, in relation to the words *merit* and *demerit*; and I now will proceed to show a similar misuse of the words *duty* and *right*.

Smith gives two definitions of *duty* — a fact which itself indicates that he felt an embarrassment in attempting to explain it. We are governed by *duty*, he says, when we obey the rules of conduct which emanate from sympathy, and by *sentiment* when we yield directly to the instinct of sympathy. But what are these rules? They are generalizations of particular judgments of instinctive sympathy: the authority of the rules, then, is derived from that of those judgments; and the motive which compels us to respect the one, is the same with that which

leads us to yield to the other. If it is a duty, then, to obey the laws, it is because it is a duty to obey the instinct, on which supposition, the distinction of Smith is without foundation. But it cannot be a duty to obey an instinct; for neither the judgments of the instinct, nor the desire of sympathy impelling us to yield to it, are obligatory; it cannot, then, be a duty to obey these rules; and duty, as Smith understands it, is not duty as we understand it; for, in our idea, it has the character of obligation, which in his it has not; so that, in using the word with such a signification, Smith actually suppresses the idea which it has always represented in human intelligence.

Smith has the art of connecting his errors with a truth, and of thus rendering them specious. Thus, in the present instance, he founds his definition of duty upon a true distinction, recognized by every one, between acting from sentiment and acting from duty. The distinction is in perfect harmony with the true nature of man, which acts sometimes dutifully, sometimes instinctively. But when we convert instinct into duty, we commit an absurdity; for we thus destroy the distinction between these two moving springs of action; and, whether we obey instinct or the rules emanating from it, the motive remains the same, and the character of the volition is unchanged.

Smith inconsistently gives, however, another definition to the word *duty*. There is but one virtue, says he, whose omission causes positive injury; this virtue is justice; it is the only one, then, which others

have a *right* to compel us to regard; and, therefore, it is the only one which it is a *duty* to practise, in the true acceptation of that word; such is the true meaning of the words *right* and *duty*. Doubtless, gentlemen, it is a duty to respect justice; and other men have a right to exact from us a respect for it, and even to constrain us to observe its dictates. But upon what are such a right and duty founded, in the system of sympathy? Follow closely this reasoning of Smith. Why is justice a duty? Because others have the right to compel us to observe it. Whence comes their right? From the fact that injustice would do them a positive wrong. My only *duty*, then, is not to injure others; my only *right* is to prevent their injuring me. I violate *duty* whenever I do evil to a fellow-being; he violates my *right* whenever he does an evil to me; I have fulfilled my whole *duty* when I avoid causing others pain; they have respected entirely my *right*, when they have caused me none. I ask, now, who would admit such propositions? Who would allow that they coincide with the true ideas of duty and right? But for the moment I will adopt these definitions, and then ask, whence, in the system of Smith, comes the obligation not to injure others, and why is it the only obligation? The emotions of the impartial spectator make me aware that he sympathizes with justice, indeed, but that he sympathizes with other virtues also; the desire of the sympathy of my fellow-beings will impel me to the practice of this virtue, but it will impel me equally to the practice of other

virtues. In proportion as the antipathy resulting in injustice is stronger, justice may find in the desire of sympathy a more efficient aid; but this difference is one of degree merely. If instinct can enforce obligation to a certain degree, it can in all degrees; and, on the other hand, if it cannot enforce obligation to this degree, it cannot in any; so that neither the rule of moral appreciation, nor the motive recognized by this system, are sufficient to explain the difference between justice and all other virtues. The system, therefore, must be abandoned, and, at the expense of being inconsistent, some other explanation must be found. How does Smith attempt to explain this difference? By two considerations: first, that injustice inflicts pain; secondly, that we have a right to repel it by force. But, abstractly considered, it is not true that the specific characteristic of injustice is that it causes injury; and it is no more true that from this characteristic is derived the right of repelling it by force; for, on the one hand, justice often authorizes, and even commands, the infliction of pain; and, on the other, so far from injustice being recognized by the fact that it is something which we have a right to repel with force, it is precisely because it is recognized as injustice that we have this right of forcibly repelling it. Not only, therefore, is the system of sympathy incompetent to prove that justice is a duty, but all Smith's efforts to determine in which the duty consists, lead only to a mutilation of the idea; so perverted does even the justest mind become by a false system, and so impossible is it found, even at



the cost of most palpable inconsistencies, to return again into the way of truth, when once led by system into error.

Nothing would be easier than to prove that what I have now said of *duty*, as explained by this system, applies with equal force to every other moral idea; but this would lead me into useless repetition; and I hasten, therefore, to test Smith's system by the third question, of which I have a right to ask a solution, and inquire what end it assigns for human conduct in the present life.

According to Smith, the supreme and final end of every human being is to contribute, with all his power, to the production of perfect harmony of sentiment among men. Such is the definitive result which all virtuous conduct tends to produce; such is the end to be sought in all our deliberations, purposes, and acts.

Unquestionably, gentlemen, a complete harmony of sentiments, and a perfect coöperation of will among all members of the human family, is one of the effects which a universal practice of the moral law would produce: every virtuous action has this tendency; every vicious act an opposite one. Yet more; I admit that, among the instincts of our nature, those which are called *sympathetic*, tend more directly, at least in appearance, (on which point I will hereafter explain my meaning,) to produce this result, than the so called *personal* instincts. But having made these concessions, we have still to inquire whether this universal harmony of sentiment and will is the true and legitimate end of the individual, which he should

set before him as the true object of pursuit, and to which all thoughts and acts of life should incessantly be directed ; for this is the point which every ethical system is bound to decide. This is a result, says Smith, which sympathy tends to produce. Well, let it be granted ; and what then ? The point which an ethical system is bound to determine is the *legitimate* end of human action : an ethical system ought, therefore, not only to assign an end to conduct, but to prove that this end is the legitimate one. This is what Smith, however, neglects to do. Of two courses of reasoning open to him, and which, though not strictly logical, would yet have given some appearance of foundation to his system, Smith has adopted neither : he has not attempted to prove the legitimacy of this universal harmony as a result, and thence inferred the legitimacy of sympathy as a motive ; nor has he attempted to show the legitimacy of sympathy as a motive, and thence concluded that this universal harmony is a legitimate result. We have already seen that he has not established the authority of sympathy as a motive ; and now I will proceed to show that he has been equally unsuccessful in proving that this universal harmony is the legitimate end for human conduct.

In what way does Smith attempt to prove that this harmony is man's true end in this world ? First, he shows that it is beautiful. The spectacle of a number of men animated with similar sentiments has, he says, the character of beauty. The effect of such a sight is like that produced by the contemplation of a complicated piece of mechanism, whose wheels, not-

withstanding their number and diversity, work together to one grand result. What is the human race but an exceedingly complicated machine; and what can be more eminently beautiful than the harmony and perfect concurrence of so many hearts and wills? I am far from denying the magnificent effect of such a result; but I cannot but say, in reply to Smith, that this consideration of beauty is not to the purpose, and proves nothing; for, supposing that the conduct of a man whose end is self-interest, should, through long years, and under varied circumstances, be steadily directed to his end in every separate act, the conditions of beauty here mentioned would be fulfilled. But would it thence follow that this conduct was good? By no means; and for this reason, that beauty is a different thing from morality. Undoubtedly, whatever is moral is at the same time beautiful; and without doubt, if we may trust our weak reason, in God these two attributes coincide, and are but a twofold aspect of the same essence; but here, on earth, beauty is not goodness; there are beautiful things without number, which have, in our view, no moral character. To establish the morality of conduct, then, it is not enough that we should prove it to be beautiful, although it might be a sufficient proof of its beauty, to show that it is moral.

Secondly, Smith proves that a universal accordance among men would be useful; and asserts that men would be perfectly happy if this harmony could be produced. I have no wish to contradict this; although, certainly, this would appear to me to be only one element of happiness, and not complete happiness.

But let this, too, be granted. Is utility, then, morality? If so, then self-love is a virtue; and it will be all in vain for Smith to prove the disinterestedness of sympathy. I have said, and I believe, that whatever is good is, for that reason, useful, and nothing can be so productive of utility as goodness. But from this it by no means follows, that the ideas of utility and of good are the same, and that the conception of the first is the acquisition of the latter. Between the utility and the legitimacy of an end there is the widest difference; and if Smith could produce a thousand proofs of the utility of this harmony, he would have done nothing to demonstrate its legitimacy.

Thus, then, gentlemen, Smith proves satisfactorily that a universal harmony of feeling among human beings is the final end of sympathy, and that this end is beautiful and useful; but he does not prove that it is man's true end; and for this reason, that he cannot prove it. His system assigns, indeed, a rule, a motive, and an end for human conduct, but they, one and all, emanate from instinct; and as the instinct is devoid of moral character, the rule can have no obligation, the motive no authority, the end no legitimacy. It is a rule to be followed, a motive to be obeyed, an end to be pursued, at our own option; in a word, it is morality deprived of its essential element of obligation. If a mind, under the direction of this system, then, does right, it must be attributed to the general coincidence between the impulses of sympathy and the requisitions of the moral law. But this coincidence is still greater between the dictates of the moral law and the counsels of interest well

understood ; for interest includes all instincts, while sympathy recognizes but a few. I have before said, and I repeat, that instinctive tendencies, self-interest, and the moral law, impel man equally to the pursuit of his true end ; but they differ in the degree in which they enable him to comprehend what it is, and in the authority of the motives which they present for its pursuit ; and *morality* depends upon the manner in which we pursue, and the view with which we regard our end. Hence the coincidences and differences which we observe among the various systems of ethics. God has not intrusted us to the single guidance of the law of duty ; he has not committed exclusively to this austere motive the accomplishment of an end, whose consequences will extend to the human race and the whole creation ; our nature would have been too weak to be governed by this sole motive ; and therefore has he, with admirable wisdom, provided numberless secondary motives, all powerful and attractive, which tend to the same direction, and become the auxiliaries of the moral law. The agreement of these motives with the moral law has deceived many philosophers ; they have overlooked the fact that these motives are all devoid of the character of obligation, and, consequently, that neither of them can be the moral law they seek. The failure of their attempts to explain our moral ideas, by means of a supposed law that is really not a law, should have undeceived them ; but once lost on a false track, the mind no more returns. It follows out its principle, reconciling its errors with common sense by unconscious sophistry. Such is the spectacle which Smith,

notwithstanding his clear intellect, presents ; and this is one consideration that has led me to give so detailed an exposition of his views.

When reason, combining into the one general end of personal good the separate ends, to which our several passions impel us, rises to the idea that this personal good is the end of our nature, and that this end is but one element of a universal order, that every rational and free being is summoned to advance, then, and then only, is an end which ought to be pursued, a law which ought to be respected, a motive which ought to be obeyed, revealed. And here is the source of those various moral ideas, which neither instinct nor interest can account for, because interest and instinct do not give them birth. Traced back to their true principle, these ideas may be explained easily, without sophistry, and in a natural and common sense ; but referred to self-love or to instinct, they remain inexplicable ; and the combined resources of the most ingenious mind can account for them only by mutilating and deforming their real nature.

## LECTURE XIX.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SYSTEM OF THE MORAL SENSE.

GENTLEMEN,

As the system of Smith is, without comparison, the most remarkable of those which seek in instinct for the explanation of moral ideas, I have taken it as the common type of these systems; and by exhibiting and refuting it in detail, I have exhibited and refuted the fundamental principle of all instinctive systems. You are now in possession, therefore, of the explanation, and can understand the common error of these systems. But, gentlemen, there are shades of difference among the systems of instinct, similar to those among the selfish systems already described; and it is well that these differences should be pointed out. *Sentiment* or *instinct*, according to all of these systems, is the source from which emanate our moral judgments and volitions; but while some limit themselves by adopting one only of our primitive tendencies, such as benevolence or sympathy, as the principle of the first and the motive of the second, others introduce into the operation of the sensibility, in its discharge of these functions, a new instinct,

which they take the liberty of creating, and which they entitle, in view of its offices, the *moral sentiment* or *sense*. This, gentlemen, is the only important difference which distinguishes the instinctive systems into two classes. To the first class belongs the system of Smith, which I have at such length discussed; and I am now to give you some idea of systems composing the second class — presenting, as they do, under various forms, the famous doctrine of the moral sense. I shall not attempt to refute them, because you will readily see that the radical defect of these systems and of Smith's is the same; and I shall confine myself, therefore, to a rapid description of them. Such, gentlemen, will be the subject of the present lecture; but, first, I ought to answer a question which probably has occurred to your minds.

How has it happened, you may ask, that all these moral systems, which we have been considering, were of English origin? The explanation of the fact is this very simple one, that moral philosophy, properly so called, has been infinitely more cultivated in England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, than in any other part of Europe. In France, for example, the Cartesian era produced only one eminent moralist, Malebranche; and Malebranche belonged neither to the class of selfish philosophers, nor to that of the sentimental philosophers. Cartesianism was followed, in France, in the middle of the eighteenth century, by a new philosophy; but this was the system of materialism in metaphysics, and of selfishness in morals; — and, called to choose between Helvetius and Hobbes, I could not but prefer



Hobbes. Much the same might be said of the philosophy of Germany, which has always been more metaphysical than moral, and has never exhibited any forms of the selfish or instinctive systems, which have obtained such a European celebrity as those of Hobbes, of Smith, and of Hume. Of the various systems of moral philosophy which have appeared beyond the Rhine, the only ones which have attracted much attention have belonged to the class of rational systems, to be considered hereafter — with the single exception of that of Jacobi, concerning which I shall make a few remarks in the present lecture. I will add, that German systems, in general, present a twofold difficulty to the French philosopher; first, that the language is one not easily acquired; and, secondly, that the German mind itself is not characterized by either method or clearness. But, in truth, the country to which these various forms of ethical systems belong, is a matter of no consequence; the human mind recognizes, every where in philosophy, the same truths and the same errors, and no nation is privileged with a knowledge of what is hidden from all others. The only difference between different people is, that, in some, the ideas which we meet with in all are expressed with peculiar clearness. I feel that I ought to give this explanation, gentlemen, because the lecture of to-day will be once again occupied with a consideration of English systems of philosophy. You must not accuse me of *Anglomania*; for I am not answerable for the fact that the system of the moral sense should have taken its origin, and have found its ablest advocates, beyond the Channel.

The philosopher who first professed this system, and gave it a definite form, was Shaftesbury. A few words will suffice to enable you to comprehend this system, which embraces all the fundamental principles of the doctrine of the moral sense.

Shaftesbury recognized two distinct classes of desires—benevolent or social, and personal desires. Desires of the first class impel us to love the happiness of others for its own sake, without any reference to its influence upon us; and their predominance in a character constitutes *goodness*. Our minds co-operate in the production and development of our desires, and, while some are naturally agreeable to us, others are displeasing. Consequently, we approve some, and disapprove others. If the dispositions of the mind are thus pleasing or repugnant to the mind itself, it must be because it possesses, independent of these dispositions, by which external objects are agreeable or disagreeable, a yet more inward disposition, fulfilling in regard to them the same functions, which they fulfil in regard to the outer world. Shaftesbury calls this disposition a *sense*, and the sense itself he names the *moral* or *reflex sense*. He it was, then, who introduced into philosophy the expression which has since become so famous. The desires of our nature, which are agreeable to this sense, and which it approves, are, for that reason, morally good; those, on the other hand, which are repugnant to it, and which it disapproves, are morally bad. Virtue consists in yielding to the former, and in resisting the latter. There is a coincidence, though not an identity, between goodness and virtue; goodness is the natural

predominance in the character and conduct of the benevolent dispositions; virtue is the predominance of the same dispositions, voluntarily produced by the reflex sense; which implies the doctrine, afterwards taught by Hutcheson, that the only morally good desires are those of benevolence. In what consists, according to Shaftesbury, the superiority of virtue over selfishness? In the fact, that the exercise of the benevolent affections gives to the reflex sense a pleasure, which that of the personal affections does not; there is more happiness in yielding to the former than to the latter. To say that virtue is superior to selfishness, is to say that it renders us happier.

You see, gentlemen, that, in this system, the principle which distinguishes good from evil, is an instinct, but a special and peculiar instinct, having an appropriate function, and wholly distinct from the benevolent affections. This instinct is what is called, by common sense, *conscience*, and, by philosophers, the *moral faculty*. Such is the principle of moral judgments. As to the motive of virtuous acts, Shaftesbury says nothing positively, and I will not compel him to overstep his own declarations; but still it is quite evidently his opinion that when we act well we yield altogether to the force of our benevolent affections, and to the influence which the moral sense exerts as an impulse. Considering our benevolent and personal affections as equal forces, it is the office of the moral instinct to give a preponderance to the influence of those which it approves; in this its whole supremacy consists — a supremacy of fact, and not of right; and, according to this view, it is the true motive

of virtuous resolves. If Shaftesbury did not himself thus carry out his thought, it must at least be said that his system leads to this conclusion.

Without professedly adopting the theory of the moral sentiment, no one contributed more to its development than Butler, another English philosopher, who wrote early in the eighteenth century, and whose works contain the germs of several fundamental ideas afterward taught by Hutcheson and Hume. Butler begins, as Shaftesbury did, with a division of our instinctive tendencies into the personal and the benevolent; but he is to be distinguished by this, that he was the first, perhaps, who distinctly recognized that one of these classes of affections is equally disinterested with the other; that the object of the first, as of the second, is an external one; and that the former seek the means of securing happiness no more than the latter. Selfishness, according to Butler, consists not in the development of the personal instincts, but in their being made predominant and supreme by reflection and our own consent. He makes a distinction, as Rousseau did at a later period, between selfishness and love of self. What is the true desire and end of self-love? asks Butler. Is it not our greatest pleasure and happiness? But nothing is so fatal to happiness as selfishness; and if, in conduct, we seek chiefly the satisfaction of our personal tendencies, far from securing our greatest possible pleasure, we shall attain only moderate pleasure, because we deprive ourselves of the gratifications accompanying the exercise of the benevolent affections, which constitute the largest element of happiness.

Selfishness is love of self perverted; and, so far from their being identical, they are opposed to each other.

Independently of these two classes of reflex dispositions, and the instinctive affections, both personal and benevolent, which they imply and presuppose, Butler recognizes a superior principle in our nature, whose function it is to form a moral estimate of our different dispositions, and to distinguish among them the good from the evil. This principle he calls, like most other persons, *conscience*, and regards its perceptions as immediate; but he does not exactly define his idea of its nature, and leaves it doubtful whether he considered it a sense, or a rational faculty. Thus far, his ideas have been adopted by the philosophers who, after him, have taught the doctrine of a moral sense in a systematic form.

Butler, gentlemen, was a preacher, and Shaftesbury a man of the world, while Hutcheson was a metaphysician by profession. It is not remarkable, therefore, that the doctrine, which the two former merely indicated, should have received from the latter a full development under a precise and philosophic form. Shaftesbury and Butler suggested the idea, Hutcheson formed the system, of the moral sense.

Hutcheson was an Irishman, and a contemporary of Butler's. His system may be found exhibited in several different works; but I shall mention only the first and last of these, because they will show us the earliest and the latest forms which it assumed. The first is entitled "An Inquiry into our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue;" the last, "A System of Moral

Philosophy." It was not published till after the author's death.

The first point which Hutcheson endeavors to establish is, that we desire the happiness of others directly and for its own sake, as we do our own; so that benevolence can no more be explained by selfishness, than selfishness can by benevolence. To prove this, he reviews the various explanations which have been given of benevolence, and shows that they have successively misstated and falsified the facts. We desire the good of others, he says, not because this desire is agreeable to ourselves, nor because it is morally approved by us; not because, by benefiting others, we secure our own good, nor because God will reward us; and neither is it because the prospect of another's happiness is pleasing, and the sight of his sufferings painful. But we desire it because we have a primitive affection, which seeks the good of others as its final end. Benevolence is a simple and original impulse, and cannot be resolved into any other.

We have, therefore, two distinct classes of affections, of which the first impels us to seek our own good, and the second the good of our fellow-beings.

But these are not the only affections in our nature. There is a third, which is distinct from both: it is the moral affection. The idea of moral good is different from the idea of our own good, and from that of another's good; it cannot be explained by them; it is primitive and simple.

Hutcheson proves this second proposition as he did the first, and shows successively, that, by moral good, we do not mean that which gives us pleasure

by gratifying our benevolence ; nor that which is good in its effects on others ; nor that which is useful to ourselves ; nor that which is pleasing to a spectator ; nor that which is conformable to the will of God, or to order, truth, or law ; nor, in a word, any other idea except the exact one which the name expresses, and which is as simple, as primitive, and as inexplicable, by any other, as are the ideas of taste or smell.

From this view of the originality and simplicity of the idea of moral good, Hutcheson concludes that the quality represented by it must be perceived by some sense, because all other simple qualities are perceived by particular senses ; and that the sense must be a special and peculiar one, because the quality perceived is distinct from all others.

Two facts confirm Hutcheson in this opinion. The first is, that the perception of this quality is accompanied by a pleasure, which is a peculiarity of all sensible perceptions ; the second is, that moral good appears to us as an end and a motive for action, whereas the understanding cannot discover our ends, nor exercise an influence over the will.

I wish particularly, gentlemen, to call your attention to this latter point, as the opinion is one held in common by all the philosophers of the instinctive school without exception, and as they are led by it to seek in the sensibility, and not in reason, the principle of disinterestedness. On some other occasion, I will explain their views of the foundation of this principle, and of the motives in which it originates. To-day, I limit myself to a simple statement of the

fact, that they find this disinterested principle in the sensibility.

Moral goodness, then, according to Hutcheson, is perceived by a sense, and this perception is accompanied by a pleasure, while the perception of moral evil is accompanied by pain. But this pleasure is the consequence of the quality perceived, and presupposes it; we cannot, therefore, resolve moral goodness into this pleasure, nor thus account for our approval of it; for this would be to resolve the cause into the effect, and to explain the principle by the consequence.

Hutcheson calls this sense the *moral sense*, and to him it is chiefly owing, that this name, invented first by Shaftesbury, has become so popular. As the qualities which it is fitted to perceive are to be found only in the dispositions of our minds, and the actions thence resulting, this sense must be an internal, not an external one. And it is not the only sense of this kind admitted by our philosopher: he recognizes several others, and, in the first part of his work, demonstrates, by a similar course of reasoning, the existence of a sense of beauty, whose function it is to perceive the original and simple quality of beauty. This peculiarity of being internal is the only difference to be perceived between this class of senses and the external senses. Although Hutcheson declares that they are not of the same low and gross nature with these external senses, yet he subjects them to the same laws, and clothes them with the same attributes. Thus the moral sense is a faculty of the sensibility; it is affected directly by the moral quality of acts,



as the taste is by flavors; it is accompanied also by agreeable and disagreeable sensations, and by desire or repugnance—though Hutcheson does endeavor to disguise this latter fact under the names of *approbation* or *disapprobation*; and, finally, the moral sense, like all the other senses, is capable of being improved.

Hutcheson ascribes, however, to the moral sense, the most important offices. It is destined, as he thinks, to govern all the faculties of our nature. Hutcheson would have done much to establish his system, if he had shown the origin of this authority of the moral sense; but, unfortunately, his whole proof reduces itself to saying that we have a direct consciousness of it. Now, it is true that we are conscious that each sense is a supreme judge in all matters relative to the peculiar quality which it is fitted to perceive, and that, in so far, it does govern our other faculties; but this would be placing the moral quality in the same rank with odors, flavors, beauty, and the moral sense would have a sovereignty no more extensive than the senses of beauty, smell, and taste. But this is not what consciousness declares to be the fact. Consciousness testifies, that moral good is an end superior to all other ends, and to which all other ends should be subordinate. This, which Hutcheson should have attempted to explain, he contents himself with simply affirming; and the reason why the moral end should be pursued, in preference to all others, remains undiscovered.

Having thus proved, as he thinks, the reality of the moral sense, Hutcheson proceeds to determine what are the dispositions of our souls in which this sense

discovers moral goodness, and which, consequently, it approves; and he explicitly excludes from this number all which have for their end our own well-being. According to his idea, our acts are wholly wanting in the character of virtue, if we have any reference, in what we do, to our own good. They may be innocent, perhaps, but they cannot be virtuous. From this it would seem to result, that the benevolent dispositions and actions only are the objects of moral approbation — and such was actually the opinion of Hutcheson — at the same time that he associates with these other dispositions, such as the love of truth, and the desire of perfection, which he describes but vaguely, and the recognition of which does not prevent him from saying that universal benevolence constitutes moral excellence, and that the morality of acts is exactly proportioned to the degree in which they possess this quality.

The function of reason, according to such a system as this, is to contrive and employ the necessary means for the attainment of the different ends, which our desires and our senses make known on the one hand, and impel us to seek on the other. Excluded from the privilege, attributed exclusively to the sensibility, of determining the proper ends for conduct, and of directly influencing the will, it is only a humble servant of instinct. Its only office is to discover the course proper for the executive power to pursue, in securing the ends which instinct reveals; and, as you may see, it is an office of quite secondary importance.

Thus, then, there are, in our nature, two kinds of instincts, personal and benevolent; and, in addition,

a moral sense, which perceives immediately, in dispositions and acts, their moral good or evil, recognizing good only in those dispositions which have for their end the happiness of fellow-beings, and in acts proceeding from these dispositions : such, in a few words, is the moral system of Hutcheson. In the moral sense alone resides the principle of moral appreciation. As to the motive of virtuous volitions, Hutcheson is no more precise than Shaftesbury ; but, as he unhesitatingly declares that the moral sense is a purely perceptive faculty, and as he recognizes that, like all the other senses, it exercises an influence over the will, we cannot doubt that he considered the moral sense to be the moral motive. A virtuous volition, therefore, is derived, according to Hutcheson, from the action of the peculiar dispositions approved by the moral sense, combined with the action of this sense itself ; and it is this latter element which communicates to the act of will a moral character.

After Hutcheson, Hume, gentlemen, is the last teacher, among the English, of this doctrine of the moral sense, of whose works I shall speak ; and I am not led to mention them from the fact that he is so celebrated as a metaphysician ; for the moral system of Hume would have well deserved to be considered, as the most ingenious of all which have professed the doctrine of the moral sentiment, even if its author had not been the founder of modern skepticism, and one of the most original thinkers of modern times. It is in his work entitled "An Inquiry into the Principles of Morals," that he has explained his views. His course of reasoning is as follows :—

What we have first of all to determine, he says, is the quality represented by the expression *moral good*—the quality which renders the dispositions, acts, and characters, in which it is found, proper objects of moral approbation. Our only mode of doing this is to consult experience, he continues; and then, passing in review the various acts and dispositions which common sense pronounces morally good, and which men agree in approving, and seeking the common quality possessed by all, he finds, as he thinks, that it is utility. But utility of what kind? Utility to the agent, or to one man in preference of another? No; but general utility, or a tendency to produce a greater or less amount of good, whatever may be the number and quality of the persons benefited by its production.

To determine with exactness the truth of this principle, Hume examines, in a variety of ways, the dictates of experience. There are degrees in moral approbation; some dispositions and acts are more, others less, approved. Now, is moral approbation proportioned to their utility? Hume proves that it is, and shows that approbation increases or lessens with the perceived utility of acts and dispositions, and that there is always a parallelism between them. Thus may be explained, he says, the approbation so generally accorded to the benevolent dispositions. As these affections tend to the happiness of others, that is to say, to the happiness of many, and sometimes of all, while personal affections tend to the happiness of one only, that is to say, of the agent—the first are more useful than the second,

and, therefore, we approve them more. This ingenious theory has the merit of not only explaining the rank which the benevolent affections occupy in the moral scale, but of leaving room also for the personal affections. As you may see, Hume does not condemn all of these latter dispositions; his system allows him to approve them; for they are useful to one person, the agent. They become unworthy of approbation only when we sacrifice to them the benevolent affections. And why are they unworthy in this case? Because then, by preferring our own good to that of others, we prefer what is least useful, while it is our duty to prefer what is most useful. It is for this reason that we disapprove the exclusive pursuit of personal good; but, in itself, we approve it, as may be clearly seen from the estimation in which we hold many qualities, on the ground that they are well calculated to secure individual happiness — prudence, skill, economy, for instance. In so far as these are useful, they are morally good; but even that which is useful may become an object of disapprobation, when it is preferred to something yet more useful.

If utility is the true object of approbation, its opposite must be the object of disapprobation. And, from the testimony of experience, Hume verifies this second proposition. He proves, that whatever we disapprove is seen to be either directly or indirectly noxious; and that our disapprobation is always proportioned to the amount of evil which the act or disposition disapproved tends to produce, or the amount of good which it tends to prevent.

An analysis of the qualities which compose and constitute what we call the personal merit of a man furnishes him with another confirmation of his theory as to the object of moral approbation. This analysis leads him to the conclusion that every element of the moral merit of men may be resolved into some useful or agreeable quality.

Hume explains very ingeniously the reason why moral acts meet with sympathy and support from others, while acts having a personal reference do not. What makes, he asks, an act moral? The fact that it is in its tendency useful. What, on the other hand, is the characteristic of acts of a personal nature? Utility to the agent. Now, what is for the good of one may not be for the good of another; indeed, it often may be a source of ill; it is apparent, therefore, that men will disagree when they are contemplating any act in view of its private utility, because this utility is relative. This is not the case, however, with any thing which is useful in itself; a tendency to multiply good is a quality which all men can equally perceive; and when the question has reference, not to the effects on particular individuals, but to the general effects of acts, all men will agree in judgment. Now, this is precisely the point of view in which utility is regarded in our moral volitions; and this is the very distinction between them and selfish volitions. It is nowise astonishing, therefore, that others sympathize with the former, and give us their approval and aid, while they are indifferent or even opposed to the latter. It is natural that they should do so.

From these few examples, gentlemen, you can com-

prehend Hume's method, and the course of reasoning by which he attempts to prove experimentally his doctrine, that in dispositions and acts, in character and conduct, it is utility, and utility alone, that we call good, and that utility, therefore, is the special object of moral approbation.

But this is only a statement of a fact, and the reason for our approval of what is useful and our disapproval of the opposite remains to be explained; it remains to be accounted for why we call the one good and the other bad. This is the moral problem. We have learned that a particular quality is the object of moral approbation; we are now to inquire why it is the object?

Reason, says Hume, may, indeed, determine, and does determine, what is useful or injurious to men; but the fact that we approve the one and disapprove the other must be owing to some primitive sentiment which makes us prefer the useful to the injurious, just as another sentiment makes us like what is sweet and dislike what is bitter. There is an instinct in our nature, therefore, which is agreeably affected by the prospect of utility, and disagreeably affected by that of the opposite. This instinct is not self-love, for self-love makes us prize only what is useful to ourselves, and not that which is useful in itself; while it is that which is useful in itself, and independently of our own interest, which is the object of moral approbation. This instinct is a peculiar one, therefore, and quite distinct from the selfish instinct, to which, indeed, it is frequently opposed. It is this instinct or sense which men call *conscience*, or the

*moral faculty*. Hume names it *humanity*; because it is the good of men as such, and independently of our own, which is its appropriate object.

You will observe, gentlemen, that, while considering utility the object of moral approbation, Hume still does not profess the doctrine of selfishness, and that there is a wide distinction between his system and that of interest well understood, to which it has sometimes been considered to be assimilated. Moral good is absolute utility, not private utility; and moral approbation is doubly disinterested, both because it is instinctive and because it proceeds from a different instinct than self-love.

Like all other advocates of the doctrine of the moral sense, Hume allows some obscurity to envelop the motive of moral volitions; and he by no means clearly distinguishes humanity as the principle of qualification from humanity as the motive of virtuous volition. No one has denied more decidedly the competency of reason to assign any end for man, or to exert any influence over the will. We are determined, therefore, in conduct, when we do right, by the attractive influence of anticipated utility, and by the sway of those dispositions which impel us to seek our own good and the good of others—dispositions by which the action of the moral sense is always seconded. As to what is commonly called *moral obligation*, Hume thinks but little of it, and considers it only a conception of reason. The real thing represented by the name, he thinks, is the obvious and just view, that happiness can be more surely obtained by following the impulses of the moral sense than by obeying the dic-



tates of self-interest. The idea of obligation could not, as you see, be more completely disfigured; it is a necessity, indeed, of the instinctive system, that it should be, and notwithstanding all his power of thought, Hume, like all other philosophers of the same school, has been guilty of this error.

I should expose myself, perhaps, to your reproach, if, in this rapid notice of the various philosophers who have taught the doctrine of the moral sentiment, I should entirely pass by two, whose names have obtained celebrity, and with whom the idea of this system is always associated. I allude to Rousseau and Jacobi. A few words will suffice for a description of their moral opinions, and will show that I have good reason for assigning them only a secondary place in this lecture.

The confession of faith of the *Vicaire Savoyard* is not only an admirable work in point of style, but, yet more, for the profoundness and truth of its ideas, deserves justly to be considered a philosophic production of the highest order. Unfortunately, however, the moral portion of this book, although perhaps the most beautiful in expression, is also incomparably the most obscure, and Rousseau's other writings furnish no clew by which we can interpret the indefiniteness of his ideas, as exhibited in this confession of faith.

Rousseau declares, in various ways, that the knowledge of good and evil is communicated by reason; but that it is by the influence of an inward affection, which he calls *conscience*, that we are impelled to seek the one and avoid the other. The moral desire,

he says, sleeps in us in childhood, because the idea of moral good is not then conceived; and for this reason, man is incapable of morality and of liberty before reason is developed. There is perfect consistency so far, and nothing could be clearer than this doctrine. But when he proceeds to describe the discovery of good by reason on the one side, and the sovereign power of conscience on the other, he loses sight of this distinction between their functions, and assigns to each principle the double duty both of making us acquainted with the good, and of impelling us to its observance. On the one hand, reason is presented as the faculty which frees the human will from the blind impulses of instinct, and gives it liberty by subjecting it to the sway of the obligatory laws of order. On the other hand, conscience, or sentiment, is pointed out as the infallible instinct, which it is only necessary for us to listen to to distinguish between good and evil, and whose decisions far surpass the uncertain and contradictory speculations of intellect. There are admirable passages, in which Rousseau adopts wholly the view of rational morality, and others, equally admirable, where he supports the principle of instinctive morality. These passages cannot, I think, be reconciled; and it seems to me, therefore, that those who class Rousseau in the sentimental school, have attributed to his ideas more precision than they really possess. All that can be said of him is, that, with the exception of a few passages in his earlier writings, he is the declared opponent of the morality of self-interest. No one has more triumphantly established the existence of innate benevolent

affections, and the reality of virtuous volitions, after reason has once conceived the idea of order. We can say decisively, therefore, what theory Rousseau did not admit in morals; but it is impossible, on the other hand, as it seems to me, to determine with precision what theory he did actually adopt.

As to Jacobi, gentlemen, to the many other points of resemblance which may be traced between him and Rousseau, as writers, must be added the indecisiveness and obscurity with which he expressed his ideas upon the principles of morality. But this indecision originated from a different source. Rousseau was a metaphysician only by accident, and evidently was unconscious of the contradiction with which he might justly have been charged as to the great moral questions. The case was quite different with Jacobi, of whom it may be said that it was because he had so deeply meditated upon this problem, and other problems which it involves, and so fully comprehended all their difficulties, that he refused to express his thought with precision. He seems to me to have preferred obscurity of expression to error. Jacobi, however, was decided on one point — that he was unwilling to consider the idea of moral good as a result of the investigations of intellect: this idea he considered immediate and simple; but whether this idea is to be referred, as the Scottish school have thought, to an intuition of reason, or, as the philosophers of the sentimental school believe, to an instinct of the sensibility, — an instinct, which is either an affection, like sympathy, or rather a sense, as Hutcheson supposes, — is a point upon which Jacobi is undeter-

mined. He seems earlier in life to have inclined to the second hypothesis, and in his later years to the first. It is plain, however, that he never decidedly expressed his opinion upon the subject, and that, while a view of some facts of our nature seemed to lead him to espouse one side of the question, a view of other facts restrained him. It is as difficult to classify Jacobi, as a moralist, as it is Rousseau; and you see, therefore, my reason for not selecting the system of either as illustrations of the sentimental theory.

Let me say a word further as to a doctrine which deserves notice from its singularity. It is that of Mackintosh, as it is found exhibited in his recent work on the "Progress of Ethical Philosophy."

Mackintosh is a professed advocate of the morality of sentiment. He admits, without hesitation, all the fundamental maxims of this system; he believes in the reality of disinterested volitions, and denies that reason is capable either of assigning any end for conduct, or of exerting any influence over the will; in his view — to express all in a few words — moral conscience is a sensible principle. But he is distinguished by this, that, in his opinion, this principle is not primitive; it is created and developed, as he thinks, gradually; or, to use his expression, it is a *secondary* formation. You will easily understand his meaning.

Self-love, as you know, or the general desire which has for its end the satisfaction of our natural tendencies, is not primitive; it presupposes these tendencies, or the pleasure resulting from their gratification, since this pleasure is its end. Self-love is, then, a principle of secondary formation. Mackintosh thinks that it

is the same with conscience. As in the phenomenon of self-love, he says, the desire, which was primitively directed to certain external objects, is transferred to the pleasure resulting from the possession of these objects, and thus what was the end becomes the means; so, in the phenomenon of conscience, the agreeable or painful sentiment naturally attending certain emotions, is transferred, by association of ideas, to the volitions and acts which they produce; and thus, in the end, these volitions and acts become the immediate objects of our love or repugnance. By the association of ideas, then, a number of secondary desires and aversions are combined together in our minds, whose appropriate and peculiar objects are our volitions; and the aggregate of these is a kind of inward sense, which we call *conscience*, and which, without any consideration of the outward results of a volition, as if by an infallible instinct, approves or blames it for itself, as well as the disposition impelling us to form this volition, and the act in which it results. The sense is developed, in proportion as minds are enriched by their associations with a greater or less number of these primitive desires and repugnances; and here Mackintosh finds the explanation of the infinitely varied development so observable in the consciences of men. The different qualities recognized by common sense in the moral faculties, seem to him to be easily explained by this hypothesis; they are all derived, according to him, from this circumstance, that conscience is the only passion which has for its immediate object voluntary acts. It results from this view, in the first place, that it can

be gratified without the use of any external means, because, to obey it, it is only necessary that we will to do so; secondly, that it is independent, for its object is internal, and no outward cause can prevent its satisfaction; thirdly, that it exerts supreme control over the character and conduct, because it is intermediate between all our other passions and their instrument of gratification, the will, while no other passion can be interposed between it and its object; fourthly, that to violate it is to be guilty of introducing disorder into our being, because, occupying the position which has been described, the control of all our volitions evidently appertains to it; fifthly, that its right and authority to command is universal, and also, since it can be gratified by a simple act of will, that nothing can more nearly resemble the relation of a commandment to obedience; and, sixthly and lastly, that it is immutable, for, as it employs no means to accomplish its end, it can never be altered by the substitution of the means for the end, and, as its object is the action, it can never be diverted from this, its appropriate end, into becoming a means to some ulterior end. Such are the tests by which Mackintosh is led to the conclusion that conscience, as he describes it, is the true conscience, and that it possesses all the qualities which common sense attributes to it. Its power over the will is derived from the influence peculiar to the primitive dispositions to which it gives control, from the pleasure naturally accompanying the development of their dispositions, and from the pleasure produced by the gratification of this secondary disposition; for a

pleasure attends the satisfaction of the secondary desires, as well as of the primitive desires. Such, in a few words, is the system of Mackintosh; and, as you can see at a glance, in thus making conscience a derived sense, it is open to all the objections to which the systems making it a primitive sense are exposed.

I have given you, gentlemen, this rapid sketch of the various systems, that you may be made familiar with this remarkable form of the instinctive system, called the doctrine of the moral sense. In my next lecture, I shall discuss, in a more general manner, the essential elements of the system of instinct, and then pass to a consideration of rational systems of ethics. With an exposition of these I shall close this review, which may seem to you already a prolonged one, but the advantages of which you will recognize and admit, when we, in our turn, attempt to explain the true principle of moral estimates, and the true motive of moral volitions.

## LECTURE XX.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM CONCLUDED.

GENTLEMEN,

THUS far I have limited myself to a consideration of the instinctive system in itself; and the only way in which I have attempted to refute it has been to require an explanation of those moral ideas for whose origin every system of ethics must account. My mode of reasoning with Smith has been as follows:—Moral ideas exist in the human mind: your system attempts to account for them: it does not succeed in giving this explanation; therefore is it false; and your description does not correspond with the real facts of human nature.

In the present lecture, I will first review, in a few words, the leading steps of the argument by which the system has been already refuted, and then proceed to another mode of refutation, which is, perhaps, more intelligible and more useful. This mode is, to compare the instinctive system with actual moral phenomena, and thus show what truths or errors it includes, under any form which it may assume. Our discussion of this large class of moral systems will then be finished.



The instinctive system is the result of two different prejudices—the one against the system of selfishness, the other against that of reason. Instinctive philosophers have all manifested these two prejudices; but, while the first may be seen equally in all, the second has been prominently developed only in a few. Of this number are Hume and Hutcheson; in whose works the twofold conviction, that there are disinterested volitions in the human soul, and yet that reason is not the principle of these volitions, is always apparent.

The instinctive philosophers, if you will permit me, gentlemen, still to use this expression, say, in their opposition to the selfish system, that to place the motive of human volitions in self-love is to assert that all volitions are interested, and to resolve all kinds of good into private good; or, in other words, it is to suppose that we have no idea of any other good. Now, say the instinctive philosophers, observation contradicts these two propositions: there are in the soul disinterested volitions—for we do not act always in view of personal well-being; and, since private good, therefore, is not our only object, we must be conscious of some other good. The selfish system is wrong, therefore, both in pretending to explain all human volition by self-love, and in resolving all ideas of good into that of our own private good.

This is the opinion which all authors, who under any form have taught the instinctive system, have expressed in opposition to the system of selfishness. Against that of reason they bring a twofold objection. Reason, according to Hume and Hutcheson, is com-

petent to show us things as they are; but it cannot make us acquainted with their character as being good or evil. For goodness, say they, is essentially a relative quality: if any thing seems good to a being, it is because there is a particular relation between it and the nature of this being; if it seems evil, it is because there is a different relation between it and the same nature. This relation, in the first case, is one of harmony; in the second, it is one of discord. Now, how shall we know whether, between our nature and some particular thing, the first or the second relation exists, or neither the one nor the other? Our nature can alone determine; and it does so by experiencing, at sight of this thing, either pleasure and desire, or displeasure and repugnance, or, finally, neither the one sentiment nor the other. If we were purely intelligent and rational, all objects would remain equally indifferent to us. Why do things appear good or evil? Only because some are agreeable and some disagreeable to our nature; or, in other words, because we have desires which they disappoint or gratify. Undoubtedly, the selfish system is deceived in supposing that all our desires are personal, and in resolving them into a love of self; but it is a greater error still to admit, for the purpose of avoiding the selfish view, that there are kinds of good which cannot be known through sensibility. Reason is incapable of deciding what is good or what is bad for man; therefore moral distinctions cannot emanate from it; but must inevitably emanate from instinct. Such is the first objection brought by the instinctive philosophers against the system of reason.

The second is as follows:—That which seems to us neither good nor evil must be indifferent to us: we cannot, therefore, will to do it; we can only will to do what seems to us good, and to refrain from doing what seems to us evil. Now, what is the faculty which perceives good and evil? Sensibility, and not reason. No conception of reason can make a thing seem to us good or evil; therefore no such conception can act upon the will; and, as the desires of sensibility can alone discern good and evil, each motive of action must emanate from them. The desires of sensibility can alone act upon our will, therefore, and the ideas of reason are incompetent of such influence. What is the function of reason? When once a good is revealed by an instinct, or craved by a passion, reason can discover the fit means for its attainment, can make us acquainted with its necessary consequences, and sometimes, by presenting one side of the object rather than another to our attention, can excite or moderate our desire; this is the whole office of reason. Without sensibility man would remain in a state of perfect indifference, and no motive for action would exist. Reason, therefore, can no more be the motive for volition than the principle of moral distinctions. Such is the second objection against the system of reason.

You see, gentlemen, how, influenced by these two prejudices, the instinctive philosophers are led to seek in our natural desires both the source of our ideas of moral good and evil, and the motive of virtuous volitions; and hence, too, you see why they are obliged to oppose both the selfish system—which

resolves the idea of moral good into that of personal good, and refers to the love of self every act of will — and the rational system — which finds in reason the source of moral ideas and the motive of moral volitions.

But now let us observe the consequences which ensue, when we seek in natural desire the idea of moral good, and the motive which impels us to its pursuit. To every natural desire and tendency corresponds some object fitted to gratify it, towards which we are impelled. This object is for us a good, because whatever is agreeable to our nature is good. Now, if this is true of all our desires, — and it cannot be denied of any, — it follows that there must be as many kinds of good as there are distinct desires. To our personal desires correspond certain kinds of good; to our benevolent desires other kinds of good; and, as our desires, both of a personal and benevolent nature, are numerous, there must necessarily be many of these kinds of good; for all are adapted to some desire of our nature, and we are impelled to seek them all by some instinct with which we are endowed. There is, therefore, a perfect equality of nature between these different kinds of good, and a perfect equality of authority between our different desires.

Imagine now some instinctive philosopher — Smith, Hume, Hutcheson, for instance — seeking among these various kinds of good, which have all the same character, the moral good, that is to say, the supreme good, to which all others should be sacrificed; and, among other various motives, all having equal authority, the moral motive, the sovereign motive, to which

all others should yield, and which may impose duties and obligations; — and conceive of his embarrassment. He is to find, among these diverse kinds of good, one which may rightfully be placed before all others, and be called emphatically the true good; he is to find, among these desires, one which has some title of sovereignty over all others, and which may be recognized as obligatory. Here is the rock upon which the instinctive system is ever in danger of being wrecked; and, to avoid it, the advocates of the system have followed two different courses — some following Smith, and others Hume.

Now, how has Smith attempted to escape this difficulty? He has simply selected, from these various kinds of good, one, which he declares to be the moral good, and the true good; and, among the different desires, he has chosen one, which he calls the moral motive — the motive that ought to control all other desires.

But by what sign does he recognize, in this particular good, the true good, and, in the motive that impels us to seek it, the moral motive? When we examine Smith's system thoroughly, we find that, in the last analysis, his only answer to the question is, that this good, and consequently this motive, coincide with those which common sense calls *good* and *duty*. Put aside the specious arguments by which Smith seeks to justify his preference of this good, and you will find that he actually trusts to this coincidence alone, and that this is the only test by which he determines that the instinct of sympathy is the moral good.

As you will recollect, I have denied this coincidence, and have shown that Smith himself allows that it is not entire. But suppose it to be admitted: what then? What is common sense? It is universal human intelligence — the intelligence that acts in you, in me, in all men. If common sense, then, affirms that the particular good to which the instinct of sympathy impels us is the true good, it must be because human intelligence perceives, in this particular good, some quality, which makes it superior to all other kinds of good, or, in the instinct of sympathy, some mark of authority entitling it to be obeyed in preference to any other instinct. But if the human mind, as it exists in men at large, can recognize these signs, surely, in a distinguished philosopher like Smith, it cannot fail to perceive them. Instead, therefore, of referring us to common sense, it would have been the easier way to point out at once these marks of superiority in the instinct of sympathy. If Smith has neglected to do this, it is because it was beyond his power. And his reason, therefore, for considering the good of sympathy the true good, is a pure paralogism. Instead of answering the question, this is but postponing it, and common sense, no more than Smith, can justify the preference of this good.

Hume and Hutcheson endeavor to avoid this difficulty in a very different way. Their mode of recognizing, among the various kinds of good, towards which our instincts impel us, the true good, is this: they invent a special instinct which they suppose to be agreeably affected by particular kinds of good,

and by particular instincts, and disagreeably affected by other kinds of good and by other instincts. We have various instincts, to which correspond various kinds of good; these would be of equal authority and value, if there was not a peculiar instinct, fitted to judge of these and pronounce some good, because agreeable to it, and others bad, because disagreeable; and, as this instinct is the moral sense, it follows that whatever pleases it is morally good, and whatever displeases it is morally bad. Such is the solution which Hume and Hutcheson have given.

As this new and peculiar instinct is a pure invention of the philosophers who assert its existence, nothing can be easier, of course, than to prove that its judgments coincide with those of the true principle of moral distinctions; and if Hutcheson has failed in doing this, Hume, with greater skill, has perfectly succeeded. This theory, therefore, is not liable to the first objection which was brought against that of Smith; but it cannot escape the second. This moral sense, which Hume and Hutcheson have introduced into our nature, is still an instinct; and, being an instinct, the good that it impels us to seek, is only one of the kinds of good which our nature craves, and can have no preference over others; and, on the other hand, as this moral sense is a mere instinct, it must be equal, and no more than equal, to our other instincts; it can, therefore, have no authority over them, and cannot rightfully secure the supremacy of the desires which please it, nor oppose the sway of those which displease it. The only thing this moral sense can do, is to lend some support

to those desires which it finds agreeable; or, in other words, we may be impelled towards certain kinds of good, not only by the instincts peculiarly related to them, but by the moral instinct also, with which these are in harmony. But of what consequence is this? The adding thus a new impulse to those already acting, is not to give them authority; for authority is something very different from force. But even this superiority of force does not necessarily follow from thus multiplying the number of impulses; for, oftentimes, when two instincts impel us toward some object, while a single instinct impels us toward another, the latter prevails. It follows, therefore, that this hypothesis of a moral sense is quite as inadequate as that of Smith's, and does not, and cannot, account for the preference accorded to a particular kind of good, nor explain why a particular instinct of our nature should be obeyed: it does not avoid, therefore, the difficulty which is fatal to every form of the instinctive system.

Such are the two great classes of the instinctive systems; and, as you see, the facts of our moral nature cannot be explained by the hypothesis of either one or the other. On the one hand, there is no natural instinct whose impulses exactly coincide with the judgments of the moral faculty; and thus the instinctive system can establish such a coincidence only by an arbitrary invention of a moral sense, opposed though this is to fact. And, on the other hand, even after the invention of this peculiar instinct, the system still fails to explain the true nature of our moral notions; for it cannot account for the authority



which the moral motive possesses, nor for the legitimacy attached to moral good; and thus is it compelled either to deny or to mutilate the ideas of law, obligation, duty, right, and all others associated with them.

Thus, in a few words, have I described, gentlemen, the fundamental principles of the instinctive system, and stated the arguments by which it may be refuted, when it is considered merely in itself, and is tested by its competency to account for the ideas whose origin and formation every moral system is bound to explain.

But now, in order that we may form a more exact estimate of the instinctive system, let us leave this negative view, and, comparing it with the facts which it pretends to explain, show in what respects it truly represents, and in what it disfigures, the reality. This is the only way, as I have often said, by which we can discover the foundation of this system in human nature, and so separate the elements of truth and error which it includes. It would be useless, in instituting this comparison, to present again to your consideration the facts of man's moral nature: I have already so often described them that it would be wearisome to repeat them now: you have before you reality on the one side, and the picture of reality presented by the instinctive system on the other; and you will have no difficulty in comprehending, therefore, the scope of the observations which I am now to suggest.

You will remember, that, of the three modes of volition which observation makes us acquainted with,

*Two flaws  
in  
Sent. System  
Not always  
morally right  
it does not  
quite settle  
Authority*

the selfish system suppresses two. It misconceives, first, the fact that reason rises to the conception of a good superior to our own; and, secondly, the fact that our natural desires seek particular objects as their final end, without any regard to the satisfaction and pleasure which the acquisition of them is fitted to produce. The psychological error of the instinctive system is less gross; for, without denying the selfish mode of volition, it asserts the reality of the instinctive mode, and misconceives only the nature of the rational mode. For the very reason that it sees only the selfish mode of volition, has the selfish system perfectly described it, and brought out into clear light its importance. And the philosophers of the sentimental school have rendered a like service in relation to the instinctive mode of volition: not only have they succeeded admirably in distinguishing it from the selfish mode of volition, but they have exhibited, in all their extent and importance, the functions of the primary and secondary desires, in the development of our nature, and thus have greatly advanced and improved the branch of psychological science which treats of this obscure and delicate portion of our constitution. For this the philosophers of the instinctive school deserve high esteem; and their success has, perhaps, been owing to the very mistake into which they fell. If they had recognized the rational mode of volition, as they did the instinctive mode, they would have studied the latter less profoundly; for they would not then have sought in it the explanation of the moral phenomena, whose origin they knew to be elsewhere

The selfish system, by suppressing, as it did, two modes of volition, was compelled to account for all the facts and ideas of our moral nature by the single mode which it retained; and in this it undertook a monstrous enterprise, which could issue only in total failure. The course which the instinctive philosophers, on the contrary, have, by their suppression of the rational mode of volition, been obliged to take, is far less repugnant to the moral sense of humanity, and conducts to consequences far less likely to be abused. When we tell men that they are incapable of disinterestedness, our assertion shocks their feelings, because it is directly contradicted by the testimony of conscience. But when a system admits the reality of disinterestedness, and confines itself to a simple expression of belief that the principle of this disinterestedness is in the sensibility, and not in reason, the human mind perceives nothing in the opinion to give it pain; for, though the fact of disinterestedness is most evident and undeniable, in the consciousness of every one, its source and origin are hidden, and can be discovered only by philosophical investigation. The instinctive system, asserting the fact of disinterestedness, coincides with the common sense of all mankind; but, misconceiving the nature of the rational mode of volition, it explains this disinterestedness by instinct, and denies the explanation which the rational system offers. I repeat, there is nothing in this to shock the common sense; and I add, that although actually quite as inadequate as the selfish system, to give a complete explanation of our moral ideas, this does not at first appear.

Many facts of our nature lead the mind easily to this solution of the moral problem, and many others seem to confirm it, unless they are analyzed with care. In a word, the sentimental system is founded upon views, which, though erroneous, still include such truths as might well mislead even candid minds. And it becomes my duty, now, to disengage these blended truths and errors. I will do so in a few words, by limiting myself to a consideration of the most important points.

In the first place, then, the instinctive philosophers all admit the fact of disinterested volitions, and all explain it by our natural desires; in other words, they consider our instinctive volitions the type of disinterested volition. The foundation at once and the fallacy of this theory may be easily discerned. If, by disinterestedness is meant simply the absence of a selfish motive, unquestionably disinterestedness may be found in our instinctive volitions; for, in yielding to our passion, we have regard only to the particular object toward which we are impelled; and not, as in the case of selfish volition, to the greatest satisfaction of our nature. There is an absence of selfishness, then, in our purpose; and on this ground it may be called disinterested. But, gentlemen, is this what is really meant by disinterestedness? Far, very far from it; for this is purely negative in character, and there is another kind of disinterestedness which is positive, whose type exists only in the moral volitions. In instinctive volitions, disinterestedness is nothing more than the absence of an interested motive; in moral volitions, disinterestedness is the sac-

rifice of such a motive. In instinctive volitions the motive is personal, although the agent is unconscious of its true nature, while in selfish volitions he is conscious of its being personal; in moral volitions, on the contrary, the motive is impersonal, and the agent knows that it is so. This, then, is true disinterestedness. Though free from selfishness, instinctive volition does not include the direct opposite of selfishness; this is to be found only in moral volition; here alone is to be seen a sacrifice of self; here alone is manifested that wonderful phenomenon of a being interested in a good which belongs not to himself, and which he pursues even with a loss of his own good. Devotedness is impossible in instinctive volition; but in moral volition there is always devotedness, even when absolute good coincides with personal good; for the act is performed with reference wholly to the former. The instinctive system is right, therefore, in saying that instinctive volitions are not interested; but it is wrong in supposing that it finds here the true kind of disinterestedness. The notion of true disinterestedness remains unexplained, therefore, by the instinctive system; and thus you can distinguish what is true from what is false, in its first fundamental dogma.

The same blending of truth and error may be observed in its other fundamental dogma, that reason is incapable of discovering a good, this being the peculiar prerogative of instinct. Undoubtedly it is not reason, but instinct, which reveals to me what my nature desires, and what is agreeable to it; and, if the word *good* has no further meaning than this, the

instinctive philosophers are correct in their opinion. Reason first appears in the sphere of instinct, exactly as it does in that of selfishness, empirically; for the reasoning of self-love is wholly empirical. Its operation is as follows: it applies itself to the different objects declared to be good by instinct, and disengaging the quality which they have in common, and which constitutes their goodness, — that is to say, their fitness to gratify a want of our nature, and to be agreeable to it, — concentrates in this quality the idea of good, previously dissipated by instinct among various objects. In doing this, reason does not create; it only separates and disengages the idea of good. Instinct, then, furnishes not only all the elements of this good, but also the very idea itself; in other words, good, as conceived by self-love, is that which nature desires; and it is instinct which teaches me, both that my nature has desires, and that certain objects will gratify these desires. Thus far, then, the instinctive system is right in saying that reason does not discover good; and it would be entirely right if this were all. But reason does not stop, when once the idea of that which is pleasing to my nature, and of that which it desires, is thus formed; it goes further, and conceives that every thing has an end; that man has an end; and, since the end of all things is absolute good, that the end of man, as one of its elements, is also absolutely good. Here reason ceases to be empirical, and creates: this idea is not a generalization of what instinct has communicated; for neither the universal conception that every thing has an end, nor the conception that the ideas of this end and of good are

equivalent, nor the application of these two conceptions to man, are deduced from instinct. Such conceptions are universal and absolute; they transcend such knowledge as instinct communicates, and can emanate only from a faculty capable of universal ideas, that is, pure intuitive reason. These conceptions are incontestable facts in our nature; and they give birth to an idea of good, absolute like themselves, from which, in turn, emanates an idea of our own good, perfectly distinct from that which arises, and which only can arise, from instinct. This, gentlemen, is what the instinctive philosophers have overlooked. And one thing further they have not seen, which is, that reason assents to the definition of good given by instinct, because, and only because, it is coincident with the true definition, conceived *à priori*. When once the idea that man has an end, and that this is his true good, is conceived, it becomes evident to reason, that this is precisely what his nature desires, and it admits, therefore, that this end desired by nature is equivalent to his true good; only in this view are they truly equivalent; and it is because reason admits them to be so, and only when it admits this, that it avails itself of instinct to determine our natural end; for though reason alone can reveal to us that we have an end, and that this end is our good, it is still instinct which makes us acquainted with the elements of this end, that is to say, with the different particular ends of which it is made up. And here it is that the instinctive philosophers have chiefly erred. They have seen, and seen correctly, that, unless our nature revealed itself by the desires,

Instinct  
Chronology  
the Conclusion  
of Reason -

reason would be unable to conceive of our end, and, consequently, of our good. But they have not seen, on the other hand, that reason could not have read this revelation in our desires unless it had previously known that we have an end; that this end is our good; and that our desires make this end known; three ideas, which the mere observation of our desires would never have suggested, and which, consequently, reason must have deduced from itself. So far, then, is it from being true, that reason is incapable of discovering any good, that it may with truth be said, on the contrary, that the idea of good emanates from it alone. (Reason communicates the idea of absolute good, deduces from this the ideas of our own good, and of the good of every being, and, yet more, suggests the method by which we may determine in what the good of any particular being consists; thus much it does *à priori*, without the intervention of instinct.) (When this is done, then, and then only, does reason become empirical, and, applying to man this method, demand from our natural desires a revelation of the particular elements of the end, which is our good; this is what reason does, *à posteriori*, with the assistance of instinct.) Suppress these conceptions of intuitive reason, and limit yourselves to an empirical application of reason to instinct, and you may discover, indeed, what nature desires, but nothing more; for this is all that instinct reveals. Far from thus learning, that what our nature desires is our true good, or that it is a good at all, it would not even occur to you to ask whether it was or not; for such a question would presuppose an idea of good,

"*à posteriori*" ~ refers to what is the object of Experience  
 "*à priori*" ~ " " " " " " Reason  
 What must be, not what is



which is not in your mind. The idea of good, in the systems of instinct and of self-love, is a paralogism; for it is not contained in the elements of human nature which these systems recognize.

You will now easily perceive how much there is of truth and of error in the opinion of the instinctive philosophers that all good is relative. In the first place, it is false in respect to absolute good; for that which is relative to the nature of God, who is the necessary and absolute Being, is not relative. In the second place, it is false in respect to moral good; for, whatever may be the nature of a free and intelligent being, it is still a good that he should accomplish his destiny. The proposition can be true, then, only in reference to the various kinds of good appropriate to different beings; and, even in this application, it is but half true; for the notion of these particular kinds of good is not wholly relative. The idea of good included in it is absolute; and, if the nature of every being was altered, it would still be true that the accomplishment of its end is a good. The part of the notion which is relative, and which alone is so, is the peculiar nature of this end and good: substitute a man's nature for that of a bee, and the good of the bee would become that of the man. Particular kinds of good, then, are relative; but still there enters into every such good an element, which is not relative, and which communicates to it its character of good, namely, the fact that it is the end of some being, and consequently a fraction of absolute good, or of universal order. If I was not unwilling to use scholastic expressions, I should say,

that each particular kind of good is relative in its substance, and absolute in its form; but perhaps such an expression would add no clearness to an idea that is perfectly simple in itself. Hume's assertion that all good is relative, is partly true, therefore, and partly false; and such must always be the character of the fundamental maxims of a philosophy which, in its attempt to explain the phenomena of human nature, overlooks some of its component elements.

We see the same blending of truth and error in the third fundamental maxim of the instinctive philosophers, that reason cannot influence the will, but that this power is the peculiar prerogative of our instincts and desires. Unquestionably, until reason conceives the idea of absolute good—inasmuch as that only is then good which we desire—desire alone can influence the will. In other words, before the discovery of absolute good, we can act only with reference to the particular kinds of good, toward which we are impelled by instinct, or else with a view to our greatest interest, that is to say, the most complete gratification of our passions. In the first of these cases, assuredly, we obey some one of our primitive affections; and, in the second, we are governed by a desire of secondary formation, that is, the love of self. Before the discovery of absolute good, therefore, the instinctive system has good reason for saying that desire alone influences the will; and, denying, as it does, that this discovery is ever made, it is perfectly consistent in asserting that reason never acts upon the will. But, if this fact, thus denied, is established, and the conception of absolute good is

admitted, then the truth of the other fact, also denied, that reason acts upon the will, must likewise be granted; for as soon as the idea of absolute good is comprehended, a new motive appears, namely, obligation. It is seen that this good is legitimate in itself, and ought to be done; and at once a third kind of influence is exerted over the will, equally distinct from the action of the primitive affections, and from that of the secondary affection called *self-love*. We may deny, as the instinctive philosophers have done, this third mode of influence; but, if we do so, we must either abandon such words as *duty*, *right*, *obligation*, or declare that they express nothing more than the impulses of instinct; and the dictates of self-interest. We have tested the systems of selfishness and of instinct by their competency to account for these ideas, and have proved that all their attempts to explain them lead to results which contradict the common sense of men. Thus, to prove that our wills are not governed by an idea, the instinctive philosophers are compelled to deny that we are influenced by the idea of obligation; to prove this, they must deny the fact of obligation; to support this denial of the fact, they are forced to deny the common meaning of the words *right*, *duty*, *law*; and this amounts to a contradiction of the universal language of men, and of that intelligence which this language represents. Such are the consequences of admitting the maxim, that reason cannot act upon the will. It is true, then, within the circle of facts which the instinctive and selfish systems recognize, that no influence over the will emanates from reason;

How say?  
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but this circle does not include all the facts of human nature; for in human nature we find the ideas of absolute good and of obligation; and, when this third mode of volition is once admitted, it is seen to be true that reason does act upon the will, through the universal laws which it promulgates. Such, gentlemen, are the truths and errors, blended together, in the third fundamental maxim of the instinctive system; and, as you can distinctly see, the truth is deduced from real facts which are admitted, and the error from the oversight of other facts which are equally real.

It would be very easy to point out other mistakes in the instinctive system; but, such detail is unnecessary, for they are all connected, more or less closely, with the three already described.

If, now, we examine these three fundamental errors more closely, and inquire in what way the instinctive philosophers have fallen into them, we shall see that, in truth, they form but one grand error, and that this has been owing to a misconception of the function of reason in producing the moral phenomena of human nature.

This very misconception, however, arises from a yet more fundamental error, which it is well you should carefully observe, as you may learn from it once again the important lesson, that a true solution of the moral problem, as of every philosophical problem, can be drawn only from exact psychological science.

This fundamental error, gentlemen, is the very one which Locke committed, and which Condillac repeated, in supposing that experience is the only

source of our primary ideas, and that the sole office of reason is to form conclusions by deduction and by induction; or, in other words, to carry on processes of reasoning.

Reasoning, as every one knows, is necessarily unproductive of new truth; for it can only proceed from the whole to the parts, or from the parts to the whole, and can find, in the conclusion, only that which is contained in the principle. If reason, then, and reasoning, are identical, it is absurd to ask from reason an explanation of the original ideas of the mind, for they did not emanate from it; and, as the idea of good is incontestably one of these, it is absurd to seek in reason for its origin and source. We must have recourse, therefore, to that faculty of our nature from which our primary ideas are derived; and this, according to the hypothesis of Locke, and of all the empirical philosophers, is *observation*.

But, gentlemen, observation is limited to the internal facts of which we are conscious, and to the external facts which we perceive. Seek now, within this circle, the idea of good, and you will be satisfied at once, that the only one to be found is that which the instinctive philosophers have adopted. Consciousness declares that we have desires, and that we are pained when these are unsatisfied, and pleased when they receive gratification; externally we perceive appropriate objects for these desires, and means fitted for their acquisition. This is all that observation furnishes towards the solution of the problem; and we are necessarily led, therefore, to the idea that good is

Is it not the  
Condition?

what our nature desires, and that this is the only reasonable signification of the word.

We have seen already, indeed, that the true idea of good is an *à priori* conception — or, to speak more accurately, the result of many *à priori* conceptions — of intuitive reason, and not a suggestion of the empirical faculty or the understanding. The true idea of good, therefore, is an enigma to all who have not comprehended this superior source of ideas. Obligated, therefore, to give some interpretation to the word, they seek an explanation from the understanding, whose only answer, as I have already said, is that given by the instinctive and the selfish systems.

Here, then, is the true source of all the errors of the instinctive philosophy, or rather, we might say, the origin of this philosophy itself. Here you see the explanation of the assertion, that it is impossible to suppose that reason can discover or create any ideas in moral science; and of the other assertion, so often repeated, that reason is an essentially secondary faculty, limited to the discovery of means of acquiring a good already conceived. In reason, the instinctive philosophers, in common with all empirical philosophers, have recognized nothing but a reasoning faculty, and have considered observation, therefore, as the exclusive source of primitive ideas. Review the writings of all the instinctive philosophers who have expressed any metaphysical opinions, and you will see that they have all been imbued with this doctrine. Obligated to account for these ideas of intuitive reason, they have been driven to various

expedients: Hutcheson invents a new and peculiar sense; Hume, unable to explain them by experience, mutilates or denies them; and, lastly, Jacobi can bring himself to deny that sensibility reveals to us our ideas of good, only when, by the profound analysis of Kant's philosophy, he has been made to discern the reality of intuitive reason, and the competency of this faculty to communicate original ideas. In referring, therefore, to this source, the error of the instinctive philosophy, I rest not merely on the intimate connection between the sentimental solution of the moral problem and the empirical solution of the origin of our ideas; but I am supported in my assertion by the expressed opinions of the instinctive philosophers themselves, who are empirical in their metaphysics and morality alike, and empirical morally because so metaphysically.

What I have now said applies not only to the instinctive system of ethics, but equally, and with yet more theoretical and historical exactness, to the system of selfishness. The selfish morality, indeed, is rigorously and necessarily derived from the empirical philosophy. It is distinguished from the instinctive system, by frankly and entirely accepting all the consequences of this philosophy. Empiricism, by suppressing the *à priori* conceptions of reason, suppresses the true idea of good; and, consequently, its only idea of good is, that it is the satisfaction of our natural desires. The selfish system admits this consequence without hesitation, and defines morality to be the pursuit of our greatest happiness, or of the greatest satisfaction of our desires. The instinctive

system, however, is not so bold nor so ignorant of the facts in our nature, which contradict this conclusion. It sees at once that such a definition of morality excludes all disinterestedness, and reduces volition to a simple calculation of personal interest. From such a consequence it revolts; for it cannot overlook the plain distinction between moral volitions and selfish volitions. There is a good quite independent of, and different from, our own, that we have regard to in action. This is the fact which the selfish philosophers pass by unnoticed, but which the philosophers of instinct cannot overlook. To explain this fact, and yet to maintain the ground of moral empiricism, that our only idea of good is of an end which nature desires, is the problem, admitting of no solution, that the instinctive philosophers have attempted to solve. We have seen in what way they have made this attempt, and how, notwithstanding the ingenuity of their theories, they have failed, one and all. They have been unable to escape the fatal difficulty, implied in the very terms of their problem, which, correctly stated, is as follows: — Good being only what our nature desires, how shall we find a good which is impersonal? The difference between the selfish and instinctive systems, therefore, is only this, that the former admits, while the latter denies and seeks to avoid, the consequences of that empirical philosophy, of which they are both the legitimate fruits.

Thus, gentlemen, have I showed you the principal source of the instinctive system of ethics. But, independently of this primary cause, many others



conspire to lead generous minds to adopt this solution of the moral problem, and to conceal from them its radical defects. With a description of some of these, I will close the lecture.

The first and chief is, unquestionably, the coincidence, already pointed out and explained, between the ends which instinct, self-love, and virtue, respectively impel us to seek. Permit me once again to repeat, that reason does not lead man in one direction, self-love in another, and instinct in a third; but, on the contrary, self-love, when enlightened, counsels us to pursue the very course to which instinctive desire impels, and reason, as the moral faculty, prescribes what self-love thus advises. This fundamental agreement between the three moving powers of our nature, has always been a source of illusion in ethical science, and, at all eras, has disguised from the philosophers of the selfish and instinctive schools the fallacy of their theories. What do we seek in moral science? asks the selfish philosopher. The true law of human conduct. How shall we recognize this law? By the fact that it is competent to explain the various volitions which determine that conduct. This is exactly what is done by interest well understood. Interest well understood, therefore, is the required rule and law, says the philosopher of self-love. On the other hand, the instinctive philosophers reason thus:—Among the various ends of human conduct, if one can be pointed out, towards which we are not impelled by a desire, or, again, a single desire shown, whose object is not an end of human conduct, then may it be granted that instinct is incompetent to explain human

volitions, and that recourse must be had to some other principle. Is the good of others mentioned? Sympathy impels us to seek it. Order? Sensibility admires its beauty. Devotion? Virtue? The generous heart rejoices in their contemplation. Such are the arguments of the philosophers of self-love and of instinct; and it is not difficult to believe that they may have seemed conclusive to their advocates. And yet, gentlemen, the answer to be given is most simple; and, as I have repeated the mention of this coincidence, I will also repeat, that this coincidence, already explained and justified, does not prove what these philosophers pretend. The moral problem is much more complex than they suppose, and their illusion has arisen from having contemplated it under only one of its faces. A solution of this problem, to be true, must account not only for the ends toward which conduct is directed, but also for the motive by which we are impelled to pursue them, and the reasons by which we are led to recognize them as good. For instance, it is a fact that the good of our fellow-beings is not an indifferent thing, and that we do often will to produce it. Hence it appears, that the good of others must be reckoned among the real ends of human conduct, and that every system must be false which leaves the pursuit of this end unexplained. But does it follow from this, that a moral system is complete in this respect, either because it shows that a natural instinct impels us blindly to seek the good of others, or that it is our interest to advance the happiness of our fellow-beings, as, by this means, we secure our own? By no means. For, in the

first place, we are really governed by three motives, in thus promoting the well-being of other men: sympathy impels, self-love advises, duty commands us, to pursue this course; and, secondly, the good of others appears to us under three different aspects — as an object desired by instinct, as a condition of personal gratification, and, lastly, as an element of absolute good. If it is true, that man is thus led to respect the happiness of his fellow-beings by these three motives, and to regard this end as good for these three reasons, it is evident, that a system which explains this pursuit of another's welfare by one only of these three motives, or recognizes it as good for one only of these three reasons, must be incomplete, and cannot give the true solution of the moral problem. It is evident, moreover, that this incompetency of the system will betray itself; for it cannot account for the facts which it has overlooked, nor for the ideas corresponding to these facts, in universal common sense and the language of all mankind. This, gentlemen, is what the philosophers of self-love and of instinct have not seen; and therefore have they employed an argument, from the coincidence of these ends and motives, which proves nothing. A moral system is bound to account for and explain not only the real end of human volitions, but the nature also of these volitions; that is, the motives and ideas by which they are determined.

The selfish and instinctive philosophers have overlooked also the fact, that this coincidence presupposes, in part, the moral mode of volition, and the *à priori* ideas by which it is produced; for this coincidence

is subsequent to the introduction of these ideas, and results from them. If these ideas were suppressed, or if reason had never conceived them, the range of instinct and self-love would be too narrow for any to pretend that they included the moral motive. And now, to give some examples—Who does not see, that the condition for a love of order, in the sensibility, is a conception, more or less distinct, of order by intuitive reason? Who does not perceive, that the delicious pleasure, which accompanies devotedness and virtue, presupposes virtue and devotedness, which themselves presuppose the conception of an impersonal good? Who, in a word, does not comprehend, that, as Providence has implanted in the sensibility desires fitted to make certain ends, which only reason can conceive, agreeable to us, these ends themselves must first be conceived, before the desires can awake? and that it is absurd, therefore, from the actual development of these desires, to infer that the intervention of reason, in making known these ends, and inducing us to pursue them, is useless? It would be difficult, perhaps, to ascertain with precision what instinct or self-interest would be, or to what courses of conduct these two motives would lead, without the co-operation of the rational and moral motive; but it is perfectly plain, that neither instinct nor self-interest would present to a man, deficient in this faculty, the same ends which, with his present constitution, he is led now to pursue.

Another cause, gentlemen, which has conspired with the fundamental harmony, now described, to mislead the philosophers of instinct, is the form under

which they have stated the moral problem — a form none the less bad because common, and which naturally leads to a defective method of examination.

There are two ways in which moral inquiries may be undertaken and pursued. The first is that which I find fault with most moralists for having adopted. These philosophers have made it their aim to discover the origin of our ideas of good and evil, of right and duty, of approbation and disapprobation, and in a word, of all our moral ideas. This is the form under which they have presented the moral problem. But the form under which I presented it was, you will recollect, quite different. The object of my investigations has been, in the first place, to learn what and how many are the real motives of human volition; and this point determined, next to ascertain which among these motives is the source of moral ideas. We may, indeed, by proceeding in either way, arrive at the desired result; but it is easy to see that the chances of error are more numerous in the former mode than in the latter. When we seek to ascertain the real and distinct motives of human volition, our inquiries are directed to matters of fact; we endeavor to penetrate into human consciousness, to observe the considerations by which conduct is determined in the diverse and multiplied circumstances of life, and thus to detect, by varied observations, the different distinct motives which influence our acts. Such an examination can hardly fail of being impartial, and the chances are many that it will conduct us to a true result; for, on the one hand, our object is to discover the various modes

in which the human will may be determined, — and there can be no motive for giving a mutilated and imperfect solution of such a problem, and, on the other, as all the distinct motives of volition must necessarily act upon the will within a short space of time, it is evident that persevering observation cannot fail promptly to discover them. And, now, supposing that these motives are ascertained, what remains to be done? We have only to determine which of these motives is the source of moral ideas, that is to say, which accounts for and explains the true meaning of such words as in all human languages express these ideas. And having before us a complete list, and in the mind a precise notion of these motives, it is not easy to see how we can be mistaken as to the one that alone can explain them; or, in other words, as to the true moral motive.

The chances are much in favor, therefore, of arriving at truth, when we adopt this mode; and only one source of error is apparent, namely, incomplete observation of the phenomena of human nature.

Can as much be said in favor of the other mode? I think not. It sets out from the fact that moral ideas exist in human intelligence, and words, expressive of these ideas, in human language, and passes at once, without intermediate steps, to an examination of the origin of those ideas. And, now, do you see what the consequences may be of such a mode of proceeding? I will tell you. Man's nature is complex, and yet its elements are in perfect harmony with each other, by reason of the coincidence already described; so that many of its phenomena, although

distinct, are parallel. Thus instinct, duty, self-love, are parallel, although widely different; and yet more, they often conspire, although each in this union remains unchanged. It is very possible, therefore, that the moralist, observing that the mode of volition which we call the *instinctive*, or the mode which we call *selfish*, impels us to the performance of such acts, as the common sense of humanity calls *morally good*, should be struck with this coincidence, and, stopping here, should think that he has discovered the solution of the moral problem. And do you not see how natural it is that he should then attempt to verify his conjecture; and that, with a mind preoccupied by his discovery, he should succeed in satisfying himself of its truth, since this fact of coincidence so constantly reappears? And do you not readily comprehend that he may limit his observation to this fact of coincidence, cease to investigate further, and conclude immediately that the words *good* and *evil* represent only interest, well or ill understood, as Hobbes has taught; or utility and its opposite, as Hume maintains; or the sympathy and antipathy of the impartial spectator, according to Smith's supposition; and, consequently, that either instinct or self-love is the true principle of moral volitions, and the true source of the moral ideas? Such, gentlemen, are the evil results of the method now described. I have been anxious that you should thus see how much the solution of any question depends upon the method in which it is investigated; and it is undeniable, that their method has contributed greatly to the errors of the instinctive philosophers, as has clearly appeared from the description already

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given of the manner in which Hume and Smith have attempted to demonstrate their respective systems.

To these causes of delusion another must be added, which is the last I shall mention. I mean the spontaneousness of our moral conceptions, and the form under which they first enter, and most frequently continue to abide in the mind.

There is a great difference between truths communicated by intuitive reason, and those obtained by deduction in this respect. The process through which the latter are acquired being voluntary, and by successive steps, we have a distinct consciousness, that cannot be misunderstood, of their rational origin. But intuitive truths, on the contrary, are rather a revelation than an acquisition. Being, as they are, the conditions of all other conceptions of truth, and absolutely indispensable to a comprehension of the external world, it was necessary that they should be originally given, and that their discovery should not be left to the accidental exercise of our liberty. The knowledge of them has been made independent, therefore, of the exercise of will, and of the activity of understanding. They appear in all men, in the stupid and intelligent alike; they arise without the intervention of attention or of will; and when once conceived, memory is not burdened with preserving these results, for they reappear whenever needed, with equal spontaneity and ease, so that, without effort of our own, and almost without a consciousness of their presence, we enjoy their influence, as we breathe the vital air, ignorant and unthinking whence and how



they came. No one remembers the period at which these intuitive truths were first acquired; and philosophers, when they observe them among the elements of our knowledge, can only admit them as necessary. Not at once, however, is their universality observed; for they do not naturally reveal themselves under this aspect. We do not begin with an abstract conception of them, and then proceed to their special application; but, on the contrary, they are always first perceived in some particular instance, and enveloped in a particular judgment; and, indeed, in the majority of minds, they are never distinguished separately, and the universal truth implied in these judgments is never disengaged. To the multitude of men, therefore, these intuitive truths remain always confused, and, as we might say, unknown, though supposed, included, and implied, in every act of judgment.

What I have now said, gentlemen, of intuitive truths in general, is true of our fundamental moral conceptions in particular; and this is a cause that has chiefly contributed to mislead the instinctive philosophers. The apparent spontaneity of our judgments upon actions has seemed to them a certain proof that they emanate from instinct rather than reason. The obscurity, in the minds of most men, of the ideas of good and evil implied in these judgments, has confirmed them in this conviction; for, according to their notions, a rational judgment is merely an application to particular cases of a preconceived general truth, and in these moral judgments, both the truth and its application are unseen. In the third place, the impossibility of assigning a date

to the first appearance of these moral judgments has seemed to them an incontestable sign that they originate in instinct; for instinct is coeval with our birth, while reason, on the contrary, is developed gradually, by processes which may be traced. Finally, gentlemen, the facts, that no human being is wholly wanting in moral convictions; that moral judgments frequently precede reflection; and, lastly, that memory and experience do not operate to produce them, as the hypothesis of their rational origin would seem to imply, — have all concurred to deceive the instinctive philosophers. When, at a later period in our course, I shall have described in detail the formation of our fundamental moral ideas, you will more easily comprehend these analogies, while you will perceive, at the same time, the radical differences which strict analysis detects. Here I close my criticism of the systems of instinct, and in the next lecture shall commence an examination of the rational systems of ethics.

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## LECTURE XXI.

THE RATIONAL SYSTEM. — PRICE.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING now examined the solutions of the moral problem which are given by the selfish and sentimental schools, we come at last to systems which seek the rule of human conduct where truly it is to be found — in the conceptions of reason. In saying this, I say enough to assure you that the systems now to be discussed approach much more nearly to the true solution of the problem than those thus far examined. Before entering, however, upon the exposition and detailed criticism of their principles, it may be well that I should recall to your minds the terms of the question to be solved, the solutions proposed by the systems already discussed, and the distinguishing characteristic of the solution given by those which I have classed under the general name of rational systems.

The consciousness that they are free and intelligent inspires all men with the conviction that there is a rule of conduct by which they should be bound ; or, in other words, that life has an end, which they can discern by intellect, and to which they are bound to direct their energies, in the exercise of freedom.

What is this rule? This is the question which it is the object of ethical science to answer. Each instant we recognize such a rule, impose it upon others, and are conscious that we ought to be influenced by it ourselves. Continually do we say, This is good, that is bad, this should be done, that should be avoided — all of which judgments imply that we have faith in some rule of conduct which we can conceive of and are bound to pursue. For we not only counsel others to do what is right, and judge, in our own case, that such conduct is proper, but we say to others, This is right, therefore it *ought* to be done, and we feel that such language is equally applicable to ourselves. The convictions, that an act is good and that it ought to be done, are identical. We feel ourselves bound to pursue the course of conduct, whatever it may be, in which we recognize this character of goodness.

It would seem, gentlemen, since we are each instant passing moral judgments, that nothing could be more definite or clear to comprehension than these ideas of good and evil. In judging, with so much confidence, of the conduct of our fellow-men, and of our own acts, it is implied that we cannot be ignorant of the essential nature of good and evil. And yet it is evident that the ideas represented by these words, *good* and *evil*, are precisely those which the numerous systems already spoken of and yet to be discussed, are striving to ascertain. This apparent contradiction must not surprise you. It is equally apparent in relation to all fundamental ideas of the human mind. Our most familiar judgments imply notions which

philosophy is still seeking to discover, and which she cannot flatter herself she has thus far precisely determined. What is more common than to hear the opinions expressed, This is beautiful, that is ugly; and who doubts that these words indicate clear ideas in the minds of all men as to the qualities which they represent? And yet how numerous are the systems which attempt to describe the true nature of these qualities! Again, we constantly say, This is true, false, probable; and, nevertheless, so long as philosophers exist, will they dispute upon the nature of truth and of certainty. We do not hesitate to say, This is; and yet, who knows the nature of being? On the other hand, we say, That is not, without knowing what is meant by nothing. Examine the systems of philosophers as to the nature of being, and they will give you, in answer, various opinions, by none of which will you be convinced.

Thus you see that these judgments of common sense, as to good and evil, truth and error, beauty and ugliness, being and its opposite, all simple judgments,—without which we could not take even the first step in our reasonings; without which, indeed, it might be said we could not act at all, nor consequently live,—imply the existence, in the minds of all men, of certain ideas; while, notwithstanding, philosophers still seek to ascertain these ideas, still differ among themselves concerning them, and give utterance to a variety of opinions and systems, in their attempts to describe and explain them.

And yet, gentlemen, this contradiction is only one in appearance. You find its explanation in the fact

that all these primitive and fundamental ideas are given by intuitive reason; confused conceptions do not prevent some apprehension of their nature in the minds of any; while yet a clear conception cannot be obtained, except by means of an analysis, that becomes difficult from the fact that intuitive reason is so intimate and familiar. Thus what philosophers are seeking is not that which all men possess as human beings. But they seek the precise moral idea, concealed beneath this name of *good*. Now, this precise idea is not present to the minds of men when they declare that *this is good* or *that is bad*. Undoubtedly, they recognize, in the acts upon which they pass these judgments, the presence or absence of a certain quality. But there is a wide difference between a recognition of the presence or absence of a quality, and a precise description of this quality; and this is exactly the distinction between common sense and philosophy. The general notion of men, as to good and evil, is such, that, if a false definition is given of these two qualities, they easily perceive that it is false, but not such as to enable them to substitute in its place the true definition. From what has now been said, we can understand how, on the one side, common sense is the rock upon which the most elaborate systems of philosophy have been wrecked, and the judge, whose sanction even the proudest have been forced to seek; while, on the other, common sense has never supplied, and can never supply, the absence of philosophy. I have, in another place, unfolded at full length all these ideas, in comparing together common sense and

philosophy, and do not intend, therefore, to dwell longer on this point here. The only important thing is, that you should distinctly comprehend the extent of that knowledge which all men possess in moral science, and then form a conception of the knowledge yet to be acquired. What we have now to seek is precisely what all the philosophers have been in search of whose systems we have examined. We have to seek, as they have sought, the *precise idea* represented in the judgments of common sense by the words *good* and *evil*, and by the expressions, *This ought to be done, that ought to be avoided*. This is the great problem of moral science; for true rules of human conduct can be derived only from a precise, clear, and true idea of the good which is our end. This great problem, then, must we now approach, and devote our best efforts to its precise solution.

We have already remarked that every act of the human will includes three elements—the volition itself, its end, and the motive by which we are impelled to pursue it. Of these three elements, it is evident that only one remains in all cases the same; that is, the act of volition. The other two, the end and the motive, continually vary, and the different modes of volition, therefore, must be resolved into a variation in these two elements.

If this is true, gentlemen, it is evident that it is by a study of human volitions, and of their different modes, that we must seek to find an explanation of the essential nature of good, and of the sentiment of obligation. What is meant by the word *good*? An *end*. What is meant by the word *obligation*?

The motive by which we are impelled to attain it. There is, then, a mode of volition, especially characterized by this, that it seeks the end implied by the word *good*, and is governed by the motive implied by the word *obligation*. We can obtain a clear view of the precise idea expressed by each of these words only through a strict analysis of this peculiar mode of volition; while the mode itself can be discovered only after an examination and classification of all possible modes of volition.

In studying the facts of man's moral nature, we have recognized, that all modes of volition, however numerous, may still be referred to three classes; or, what amounts to the same thing, that the will can be really determined only by three motives, and can seek only three really distinct ends.

This being true, gentlemen, two consequences follow; first, that the mode of volition, whose end is good, and whose motive is obligation, is necessarily one of these three modes; and, secondly, that, when philosophers have sought to determine the end of volition represented by the word *good*, and the motive of volition represented by the word *obligation*, they have found it impossible to invent, in their solution of these questions, more than three distinct systems. If there are actually but three distinct ends, and three distinct motives, of human volition, it is impossible to imagine that any system should seek a solution elsewhere. *À priori*, then, human nature, and a complete description of the phenomena of will, being given, philosophy can propose only three distinct solutions of the moral problem — the selfish, the



instinctive, and the rational solutions. To arrive at a true solution of the problem, therefore, it is only necessary to examine these three solutions, and see which is adequate to explain the facts of man's moral nature.

This is precisely the task in which we are now engaged, and which we have in part already finished. Of the three possible solutions of the problem, I have already examined the two first, and proved that they do not answer it aright. Allow me to call your attention, for a moment, to the precise characteristics of these two solutions, and to the reasons which have compelled me to reject them, before passing to a consideration of the third and last.

The selfish system declares, that, when we use the expression "This is good," the word *good* is only intended to designate the greatest satisfaction, or the greatest happiness, of our nature; and, consequently, it sees, in what is called *obligation*, only the motive which impels us to seek this greatest happiness; or, in other words, that desire of secondary formation, which is but the aggregate of all our primitive desires, and is denominated *self-love*. Such is the selfish solution of the moral problem.

In what way have I refuted this solution? Let us see. In the first place, I have shown that, between the moral judgments actually passed by common sense, and those which it ought to pass—if by the word *good* was meant the greatest happiness of our nature—there is no coincidence; or, if there is such a coincidence, that it can be recognized only by that highest Intelligence, who foresaw and adapted

the means of happiness. And as, in fact, multitudes of individuals, entirely incapable of such an estimate, do pass these judgments, it follows, that, even if this coincidence was made perfectly evident, the explanation would still be inadequate. In the second place, I have shown that if, by the word *good*, in our moral judgments, we understood our highest personal good, we should be conscious that this was our meaning, and that we had previously considered the relation of these things to our greatest happiness. Now, so far from being conscious of this, we are conscious of directly the contrary. There is even less coincidence observable, therefore, between the internal facts, than between the external facts. Such was my first mode of refuting the system of selfishness. The second was as follows:—I maintained, even if the motive of the selfish mode of volition is admitted to be the desire of our own private good, that this motive is still not an obligatory one, because that which we desire is not seen to be that which ought to be done. Thus, then, by comparing the selfish solution of the moral problem with the judgments of common sense, I have shown, on the one hand, that there is no coincidence between the idea of *good*, as explained by the selfish system, and the idea of *good* as we find it in the moral judgment of common sense; and, on the other hand, that the *good* recognized in our moral judgments is accompanied by a sense of obligation, while the selfish motive is not. Such, then, is the selfish solution of the moral problem, and such are the reasons which have led me to reject it.

In what, now, does the instinctive solution of the moral problem consist? The philosophers of instinct pretend, that this word *good* designates simply the peculiar object of a natural affection, and that the motive implied by the word *obligation* is merely this desire itself. The only difference among the philosophers of instinct is, that some of them have considered this affection as one which always exists, and is always recognized, in our nature; while others, acknowledging that the tendency of no commonly recognized affection coincides with the idea of good, have invented a new affection, commonly overlooked, but proved to possess real existence by the very fact that such an end as good is pursued. I have refuted this second solution of the moral problem exactly as I did the selfish solution. In the first place, I have shown that no natural affection is or can be accompanied by the sense of obligation, and that no affection can rightfully exercise supreme control over other affections; and, therefore, that the instinctive solution of the moral problem is inadmissible. In the second place, I have shown, even supposing it to be true that the combined ends of all our natural affections are coincident with the end represented by the word *good* in moral judgments, that still the particular object of any one of our affections cannot be thus coincident; and that Smith himself has granted this to be true in the case of sympathy, which certainly could best stand such a test; and thus, that the solution of the instinctive philosophers, who make moral good the object of a peculiar affection, even if it saves their system from the second objection, is still exposed to

the first, which alone is sufficient to disprove it. For, however elevated may be the object of this new affection which they have invented, we still can be impelled to its pursuit only by the affection itself. This affection is equal, and only equal, to our other affections; it can in no way, therefore, be more obligatory than they. Thus have I refuted the instinctive solution of the moral problem.

Having now recalled to your minds the point from which we set out, and the way we have traversed, we come next in order to a consideration of the third possible solution of the moral problem; that is to say, the rational one. In a few words, I will explain to you in what this consists. The common characteristic of all possible rational systems is, that they consider the idea of *good*, as it is found in the moral judgments of common sense, an *à priori* conception of reason. Whatever, therefore, may be the idea which, according to these systems, is expressed by the word *good*, they all agree in recognizing that it is communicated neither by instinct nor by experience, but that it emanates from intuitive reason. Another dogma, held in common by all rational systems, is, that to the idea of good, as conceived by reason, is immediately attached the idea of obligation; so that, whenever we conceive of any thing as good, we know at once that it ought to be done.

All rational systems agree, therefore, both in the origin of the idea of good, which they refer to an *à priori* conception of reason, and in the nature of the accompanying motive — a motive purely rational, and represented by the word *obligation*. All consequently

agree in not recognizing the type of moral volition either in the instinctive or in the selfish modes of volition, and consequently in rejecting as false both the selfish and instinctive solutions of the problem, whose object it is to determine the true elements of the moral mode of volition. The rational philosophers, therefore, do not consider the idea of the greatest satisfaction of all our natural affections, nor the idea of a special object of a particular affection, equivalent to the idea of good. But they all assert that this word represents another idea, which only reason is capable of conceiving, and which appears to us as obligatory the moment it is conceived. Thus far the rational philosophers agree, in the solution which they give of the moral problem.

They differ from each other, however, in this, that some consider the idea of good as simple and irreducible, while others do not. In the minds of the former, in other words, the idea of good is not a complex notion, which can be decomposed into the particular notions which it comprehends; nor is it another expression of a still higher idea, into which it may be resolved, and by which it may be explained. According to their opinion, we cannot explain the idea of good; we can merely name it. The idea in itself is clearer than any other into which it can be translated; and attempted explanations, therefore, serve but to obscure it. Philosophers who take this view easily solve the problem of the nature of good. To the question *What is good?* they reply, *It is good*, and seek only to determine the objects in which it may be discerned, the conditions under which it is

conceived, and the phenomena by which this conception is accompanied. As systems of this class entirely coincide as to the nature of good, without attempting to define it, they cannot differ upon secondary points. I shall consider them, therefore, as one, and shall criticise them altogether. Cudworth, Price, and the philosophers of the Scottish school, properly so called, are the writers who have embraced this opinion. The rational systems which adopt the opposite idea, can, on the contrary, be easily distinguished from one another. Admitting that the idea of good is one that can be resolved into another or several other ideas, and, consequently, that it can be defined, the authors of these systems give different definitions, and hence results a great variety of systems. Thus, by *good*, Wollaston means what is *true*, and considers that conduct morally good which is conformable to truth. Malebranche, on the contrary, defines good to be *order*, and makes morality consist in acting in obedience to this order. *Good*, according to Clarke, is acting with a reference to the fitness of things, and according to the nature of things — agreeing in this with the Stoics. Wolf supposes that the idea of good resolves itself into that of *perfection*, and Ferguson into that of *excellence*. When I come to the examination of this class of systems, I will point out to you the different solutions which have been given to the moral problem, as regarded from this point of view. My only object at present is to make you acquainted with my reason for the classification now made of the rational philosophers. This classification is justified by the fact that some

of these philosophers consider the idea of good a simple idea, like those of time and space, and consequently refuse to define it; while others attempt to give a definition of good, and are thus led to invent a great variety of theories.

My design, gentlemen, is to exhibit successively specimens of these two classes of systems. It is by examples that I have endeavored to make you acquainted with the true spirit of the selfish and the instinctive systems of ethics. To this method I shall adhere, and by examples shall introduce you to the knowledge of the rational systems of ethics. Instead of such long developments as I have entered into with regard to the selfish and instinctive systems, I shall be compelled to give but a hasty exposition of the rational systems. For the length to which, in spite of myself, this preliminary part of my course has already extended, begins to alarm me; and, fortunately, the progress which we have already made in our researches, will permit me to be more rapid than I should wish, under other circumstances, to be myself, or than you, perhaps, may desire. In a few words I can explain my meaning.

Let me remind you that the end which we have proposed to ourselves in this preliminary examination, is twofold; first, to examine the different systems which, in any way, have misconceived or mutilated the true principle of morality, that is to say, the law of obligation; and, secondly, by a criticism of these systems, to disengage, in a distinct and precise manner, the law from which all ethics spring. What now, gentlemen, is the essence of the rational system?

It is, that it refers to intuitive reason, the origin of our idea of good. But on what foundation does the rational system rest, in forming this conclusion? Necessarily, upon the characteristics of good, as they are found to exist in moral judgments, and upon the nature of the only ideas which instinct and understanding can give. All rational systems deny, then, necessarily, that instinct or understanding are capable of revealing our true good. All reject, therefore, the instinctive and the selfish ideas of good, as not equivalent to our true idea. Thus much the rational system necessarily denies; and now, on the other hand, what does it, by an equal necessity, admit? It admits that good, as it is found existing in moral judgments, is obligatory and impersonal; in other words, that it has the authority of a law; and that it is good, not only in reference to the individual, but in itself. For such are the characteristics which we are forced to ascribe to the idea, as revealed by intuitive reason. But, gentlemen, our opinions upon these points are already entirely made up; for we have considered and determined them at length, in our criticisms of the selfish and instinctive systems. Now, if, on the one hand, these points are all settled in our minds, and if, on the other, all rational doctrines are unanimous in relation to them, it is useless for us to examine, in detail, the parts of these systems in which they are contained; especially as we shall be obliged to return to the consideration of these truths, and to establish them scientifically, when we attempt to lay down for ourselves the foundations of an ethical system. There is only one other way, therefore, — and upon this



point the rational systems differ, — in which false representations may be given of the real foundations of morality ; and this point is the only one, moreover, which we have not as yet determined for ourselves. It is the nature of good. What is good ? What idea is really represented by this word, in moral judgments ? Is it a simple, undefinable idea ? Or is it an idea that can be defined and resolved into some other ? If so, what is this other idea ? Such is the point in discussion between rational philosophers ; and this is the only question which it is now important for us to determine. Upon this point, indeed, we have approached nearly to a decision. For we have already removed a multitude of errors, and disengaged many of the fundamental truths of ethics. This problem alone remains, and this must now be solved. For how can we determine the true rules of human conduct, if we are ignorant of the essential nature of good ; that is to say, of the supreme idea from which these rules must be derived. Thus, as you see, our work is much simplified ; and, because thus simplified, it will be necessary to examine the rational systems upon one point only. We can easily, then, be more rapid in this part of our historical view.

With these preliminary observations, gentlemen, we will proceed to the discussion of the rational systems, and commence with those included in the first category ; that is to say, with those which consider the idea of good as simple and irreducible.

The system which I have selected, to give you a true and complete idea of these systems, is that of Price, an English philosopher, who lived in the eighteenth

century, and whose writings are anterior by many years to the first work of Reid, the founder of the Scottish school. This preference of the moral system of Price over those of the Scottish school which take the same view, does not arise simply from the fact of its priority, but yet more and chiefly from the intrinsic excellence of Price's exposition, which, for extent and clearness of view, is superior to those of either Reid or Stewart.

Price is not the first, who, in England, adopted and taught this form of the rational system. At an earlier day, Cudworth had maintained the same opinion in opposition to the system of Hobbes. Cudworth's ideas may be expressed in a few words. He taught that our ideas of good and of evil are not communicated by either sense or experience; that is to say, that we do not acquire them from instinct, nor by deducing from instinct the notion of our greatest good. According to this writer, reason instantly conceives the ideas of good and of evil, from a contemplation of human actions, as absolutely as it conceives the idea of cause from that of events, or the idea of space from that of bodies. But, as when we behold an event, and conceive that it has a cause, we do not deduce the idea of cause from that of the event, although this latter is the occasion of the former, so, according to Cudworth, the ideas of good and of evil do not originate from the sight of actions; but actions are rather the occasions when these ideas awake, which are always latent within us, and which, once conceived, become universal. Whence come these ideas which we find within us? From the

divine mind, which is their natural and eternal home, and from which human reason is an emanation. You recognize in this system the doctrine which Plato so admirably unfolded. According to this system, universal and absolute ideas of good and evil, of beauty and deformity, of truth and error, exist from all eternity. Emanating from the supreme reason, our minds preserve a confused remembrance of these ideas; they sleep in us until external occasion awakens them; the current of external phenomena soon calls them forth, when instantly they become associated with all objects around us, and communicate to them a meaning and a character which they have not in themselves. This doctrine of ideas, if not in its form the most strict and rigorous, is at least ingenious; for it not only recognizes the presence of these ideas, but explains their origin and cause. In reproducing this system, Cudworth accomplished the end that he had chiefly in view, and proved that our moral ideas had not that merely relative and indefinite character which the system of Hobbes supposed. Actions are not good, in our view, on account of their relation to the sensual desires of our sensitive nature, transient and accidental as these necessarily are. The idea of good exists independently of every act, and of every individual being. It is eternal and immutable as the Deity in whom it resides. Our reason does not create this idea, but conceives it, and judges actions by this immutable test. With the idea of good is directly associated the idea of obligation; so that we have duties and a law; and these duties and this law are as immutable as good itself. Cudworth

declares this idea of good to be simple and indefinable, and thus belongs to the class of rational philosophers whose systems we are now engaged in considering. I limit myself to these few remarks upon the system of Cudworth. They will suffice to show you that the theory of Price was not without precedent in his own country.

What Hobbes was to Cudworth, Hutcheson was to Price. It was an apprehension of the consequences which might be drawn from the doctrine of the Irish philosophers, that determined him to write; and it was with a desire of preventing these consequences that he brought forward his system.

What was the theory of Hutcheson? It may be described under three heads. He taught, first, that our ideas of good and evil are simple and original; secondly, that, being simple and original, they must necessarily be derived from a sense; thirdly, that, as each sense is an arbitrary principle of our constitution, good and evil are relative to our constitution, and have no more objective reality than sweet or bitter; that is, they would change their nature if we were changed ourselves. This is what Hutcheson has either explicitly asserted, or by implication allowed. His system, strictly interpreted, would lead to the conclusion, that the words *good* and *evil* did not designate the real qualities of actions, but simply the sensations which they caused in us. Now, if this is true, there can be no morality; and it is true, if either the instinctive system or the selfish system can be established; for the selfish system, equally with the instinctive, asserts that an action is

good, only because it is fitted to produce in us a certain pleasure. Price saw, distinctly, both the identity, under this point of view, of these two systems, and the dangerous nature of the consequences in which both issue. His aim was, to maintain the objective reality and the immutability of good and evil.

Price, gentlemen, proceeds like a master. With clear and penetrating view, he grasps at once the essential difficulty, and comes directly to the question, which must be clearly stated before it can be solved. This question is no other than that of the origin of our ideas. For what is really the point in discussion? We have two faculties, the intelligent and the sensitive faculties. The first of these sees things as they are; the second perceives only the effects which they produce upon us. Ideas communicated by the former, denote realities which are independent of ourselves, and which would exist if we were otherwise constituted, and even if we ceased to be. The ideas communicated by the latter, on the other hand, denote only inward facts and sensations, which would not exist without us, and would change if we were changed. The question as to the objective reality and immutability of good and evil, reduces itself, then, to this — Are our ideas of good and evil of the first or second kind now mentioned? Or, which amounts to the same thing, are they derived from our intelligent or from our sensitive faculty? Hutcheson says that they are derived from the sensibility, and, consequently, that they are of the second kind. But why does he assert this? Because he admits the doctrine

of Locke, as to the origin of our ideas. What is this doctrine? It is, that all our primitive and original ideas are derived from sensation and reflection; or, in other words, that they are all communicated by experience. If we admit that this doctrine is true, Hutcheson has good ground for his opinion; for understanding, that is to say, observation, applied to actions, would not discover either good or evil. Good and evil are not visible qualities of actions, as form and extension are of bodies. These words, therefore, can only represent the sensations of pain or pleasure, which actions produce in us. Now, it is a fact, that actions do produce in us such sensations. This, then, is exactly what the ideas of good and evil represent. These ideas are derived, therefore, not from the intellect, but from the sensibility; and as they are special and peculiar ideas, they must be derived from a particular sense; so that, if the doctrine of Locke, as to the origin of our simple ideas, is true, Hutcheson's argument is good, and his system is established. The question to be determined, then, in order to decide whether he is right, is, simply, whether the opinion of Locke as to the origin of our ideas is well founded. This is the very point which Price first takes up; and he answers it by proving that the system of Locke is false, and that it is a mistake to suppose that all our simple and primitive ideas are derived solely from experience.

His demonstration is as complete as it is simple. He takes up certain ideas, and shows that they cannot be accounted for nor explained, either by the operations of the sensibility, nor of the intellect, in so far

as it is an empirical faculty. Sensibility cannot explain them, because they represent no sensation. The intellect, in so far as it is an empirical faculty, cannot explain them either, because, in the first place, these ideas represent nothing which can be observed, either within or without us; and because, secondly, they represent that which transcends the bounds of all observation, and of all generalization; in other words, these ideas are absolute. A consideration, which proves decisively that these ideas do not originate from experience, is, that experience presupposes them; so that we cannot form any judgment at all, or come to the understanding of any thing whatever, without these ideas. If these ideas exist, and if they are not derived from sensibility nor observation, what is the consequence? They must either be denied or recognized. To deny them is impossible, although Hume has dared to attempt it. They must, then, be admitted, either as the pure forms of our own minds, — and then we fall, as Kant at a later period fell, into universal skepticism, — or, as conceptions of real, although invisible facts. Now, evidently, says Price, this latter hypothesis is the only one that can be admitted, because it is the only one which is conformed to the universal faith of humanity, and to the consciousness of every man. When we conceive the ideas of time, space, cause, and so forth, we believe firmly that these ideas represent external realities, although these realities are simply intelligible, and not visible.

If such is the true nature of our ideas, they must necessarily be referred to some faculty which perceives in things what is really there, that is to say,

to the intellect, and to a particular exercise of this faculty, distinct from that which is designated by the word *observation*. The intellect appears under two forms, then, as empirical intellect or understanding, which sees in things such qualities as can be observed, and *à priori* intellect, or intuitive reason, which, beyond the visible, conceives of an invisible, that transcends all observation and all experience. The doctrine of Locke, therefore, is too narrow. It cannot explain all our ideas. It is true that there are only two sources of primary ideas — the sensibility and intellect. But Locke has recognized in the intellect only the power of observation, while, in addition to this, it includes intuitive reason, the fruitful source of all these primary ideas, by which we are enabled to comprehend the outward world, and of all the fundamental ideas of human faith. I have much abridged, and have expressed in my own way, this beautiful demonstration of Price, which, since his time, we have seen professed under different forms, both in Scotland and in Germany. But Price really saw all that I have now ascribed to him; and nothing has been added to the views which he suggests.

From this determination, Price returns to the ideas of good and evil, and resumes the consideration of Hutcheson's reasoning as to their origin. The ideas of good and evil are simple and primitive, says Hutcheson; and Price agrees with him. If they are simple and primitive, continues Hutcheson, they must emanate from a faculty capable of giving us such ideas. Now, continues Hutcheson, we perceive good and evil in actions, as we perceive extension and form



in bodies. This is true, says Price. These ideas, then, can only be ideas of sensation, says Hutcheson; and they must necessarily, therefore, be attributed to a peculiar sense, which is agreeably affected by some actions, and disagreeably by others. Here Price stops Hutcheson. Your conclusion is not a just one, he says, for, besides observation and sensibility, there is a third source of immediate and primary ideas — intuitive reason. It is true that observation cannot give us the ideas of good and evil, as you have proved; but there are two other faculties, sensibility and intuitive reason; and possibly the ideas of good and evil are derived from the last. Now, the question is, are they really thus derived, or do they come from sensibility? Price answers this question in favor of intuitive reason. In a few words, his argument is as follows:

He first accounts for and explains the opposite opinion. It originates in the fact that good and evil, when perceived in actions, do affect us agreeably or disagreeably. This latter fact has been alone regarded, while the first, although necessarily implied in it, has been overlooked. What, continues Price, is the peculiar mark which distinguishes ideas derived from sensibility from those derived from intellect? It is this: We feel that the former represents only our own sensations, while we know that the latter represent realities independent of ourselves. Now, when the voice of humanity declares, that ingratitude is a vice, and gratitude a virtue, what is meant by these words — *vice* and *virtue*? Do they mean only that these two courses of conduct produce in us cer-

tain sensations? Or do we not rather intend that they are in themselves virtuous and vicious? Evidently, the consciousness of every man repels the first opinion, and admits the second. But, it may be asked, do not men believe that sweetness and bitterness reside in bodies? Yes, answers Price, although upon reflection they discover that this is an illusion, because the idea of body is found to be incompatible with that of these qualities. On the contrary, when we reflect, not only do we find that the ideas of good and of evil and the ideas of actions are compatible with each other, but we see that it is absurd to suppose that good and evil are only impressions in our own minds, and not the qualities of actions. If we admit the idea that they are only impressions in ourselves, we must be led to consequences of which each is more repugnant than the other. If this were true, it would be impossible that we should ever be deceived in moral judgments, because the impressions in which good and evil consist must always be what we at the moment feel; so that, when two opposite judgments are passed upon the same action, by different individuals, or by the same individual at different times, both must be entitled to equal weight. Again, if it were true, actions would be indifferent in themselves; for intellect sees only things as they are, and it cannot see good or evil: all actions, all conduct, therefore, would be equally indifferent to God, who is pure intellect. Finally, if it were true, nothing could be obligatory, for no one can be obliged to do what is merely agreeable, and to abstain from doing what is merely disagreeable. Thus all considerations com-

bine to show the falseness of the hypothesis that the ideas of good and evil express only our sensations. All prove that they answer to real qualities in actions. The consequences of Hutcheson's doctrine, then, are overturned, and what Price has demonstrated to be possible is now proved to be true: these ideas arise not from sensation, but from intuitive reason; they are *à priori* conceptions of reason.

Such, gentlemen, is Price's demonstration of the rational origin of moral ideas. This demonstration is not only beautiful, it is invulnerable; and from it may be deduced at once the necessary conclusion, that good and evil are immutable.

All real qualities of things, says Price, are derived from their nature. Now, the nature of things is immutable. God may destroy what exists, but he cannot make it to be what it is not. No will, and no power, therefore, can alter the nature of things; and this is equally true of their real qualities. Good and evil, then, being real qualities, are as immutable as the nature of the actions from which they are derived; so that no power nor will—not even those of God—can make good actions other than good. What they are, they are as eternally as a triangle or a circle is what it is. Every true moral judgment, therefore, expresses an absolute, immutable, eternal truth.

Having thus demonstrated that these ideas of good and of evil are not subjective, that they are immutable, and that their origin is rational, he proceeds to describe the mode in which they are conceived or perceived by reason. For it is not enough to show,

that the idea of good is given only by reason; it must also be shown how it is given. Upon this point, Price is much less explicit than upon the former. Indeed, it might be said that he does not touch upon it at all; but his opinion, nevertheless, may be so clearly inferred from his other ideas, that it is impossible to misunderstand its nature.

According to his doctrine, the conception of good and of evil arises whenever we behold the acts of free and intelligent beings. Good and evil, therefore, are only the qualities of such actions. These qualities, indeed, are invisible to observation, but they are intelligible to reason. As, when I see an event, I form the conception that it transpires in time, although time is invisible, so, when I see certain actions, I conceive that they are good and bad. Price distinctly denies that this character of being good or bad is owing to the agreement or disagreement of actions with an external fact, such as order, the will of God, or the nature of things. Neither does he think that this character is owing to the agreement or disagreement of actions with an absolute idea of good and evil—the typical idea which Plato and Cudworth supposed to exist in our minds. His opinion rather seems to be that the moral character of actions is instantly recognized. And this character is seen to be always identically the same, however numerous or various may be the acts in which we observe it; it is still the same quality which makes them good. But we do not, except after having often observed it, disengage the idea of this quality in such a way as to be able to apply it to the future as a formula, and

so judge of actions by their agreement or disagreement with this type. In every particular instance, the character of the action is instantly recognized by reason, as soon as the circumstances of its agent and its object are accurately known. For, by action, Price does not understand simply the physical act, but also the motive which produces it, the end to which it leads, the nature and situation of the person who performs it, and of the person whom it affects, and, in a word, all its attendant circumstances; so that, if these circumstances are changed, while the act physically remains the same, the action itself is changed. The mind, then, according to Price, does not proceed from the idea of good to the idea of the principal virtues, and from the idea of these to that of the different cases in which they are observed; but it follows just the opposite course. The quality of goodness is first recognized in particular acts; and then, the actions being more nearly observed, it is perceived that they may be readily classed under a few heads, such as justice, truth, benevolence, gratitude. Hence the idea of the different virtues, and of the different branches of duty. The mind perceives, to be sure, that all these virtues are virtues, by reason of the presence of this same quality of goodness; but they are, nevertheless, different, and cannot be resolved into each other. It is true, and evidently true, for instance, that it is right to be just, honest, kind; but these several truths cannot be deduced from each other, nor from any higher truth. They still remain so many primary, distinct truths. They all imply, indeed, that the character of goodness

may be recognized in these particular actions; but, as this recognition is, in each case, a simple fact, to be explained by nothing simpler than itself, and, consequently, by no one reason common to them all, we can ascend no higher, and must pause here. These separate truths, says Price, are portions of that eternal and immutable truth, which is a mode of God's own being. In God, the eternal and immutable idea of good, and the eternal distinction of good and evil, abide with these separate truths forever. Such is the manner in which Price understands our rational conception of good, and in which he explains our moral judgments.

As to the idea of good, Price asserts that it is simple; which amounts to saying that good in itself, or the quality by which all good actions are constituted good, seems to him to be a quality *sui generis*, original, and incapable of being decomposed, — like whiteness, for instance, — and, consequently, quite as indefinable as this. From this you may see, that the opinion of Price is veiled by no obscurity, and that he evidently belongs to the first category of rational philosophers. You will easily comprehend, gentlemen, that such an opinion, however firmly believed, is not of a kind to be established by direct proofs. How could you prove that whiteness is a simple quality, and, consequently, that it is indefinable? Whiteness is a fact, and we can only affirm it. Price thinks it is the same with our idea of good; he limits himself, therefore, to the assertion, that the quality represented by this word is simple, and summons those who pretend to define it to describe its elements. But,

although his direct proofs are reduced to this mere assertion, he produces an abundance of indirect proofs to support his opinion. He demands the reason why, if good is definable, this definition is not to be found in every mind, and why philosophers who have sought it have been led to such different modes of expression. He reviews these different modes, and attempts, on the one hand, to show the illusion by which it has been supposed that they were definitions; and, on the other, to prove that they are not definitions. Some, he thinks, express only circumstances or effects inseparable from good; others mistake a particular instance of good for good itself. Instances of the first kind may be seen in such formulas as these:—Good is that which ought to be done; good is perfection; good is excellence; to act well is to act according to the nature of things, or conformably to the fitness of things, or conformably to the will of God, to the laws of reason, to order, and so forth. He includes, in the second category, all those systems which have elevated one virtue—such as veracity, benevolence, social feeling—into a type of virtue, and have given the definition of this particular virtue as a definition of virtue itself. He then demonstrates that these pretended definitions are all inadequate; shows that they none of them define good itself, but some other thing, while they all presuppose the very idea of good which they attempt to explain. He shows, further, that they do not tend to make the idea of good clearer, because, as they presuppose this idea, it is necessary that it should be conceived before they themselves can be comprehended. And, finally, he shows that,

as *criteria* to determine what is good, they are all useless, because the judgment of good is formed instantly; and that they are all inexact and dangerous, because less comprehensive than the idea of good itself. He dwells at length upon the definitions of the second class, and proves in detail that it is impossible to derive all virtues from a single one; and that each virtue may be deduced from every other with equal propriety; that benevolence can as well be deduced from veracity, for example, as veracity from benevolence.

To all such definitions Price opposes at once the testimony of consciousness, which gives, he thinks, clear evidence, in the first place, that we ourselves are not governed by any of these definitions in our judgment of actions; secondly, that moral judgments are passed by children, who make no inquiries as to the truth of these formulas, and who, indeed, are incapable of such processes of reasoning, as the moral appreciation of actions by these formulas would imply; and, finally, that they are passed by people at large, in whom, as is easily seen, a like ignorance and incapacity of reasoning exist.

Whence originate, says Price, these various definitions, and the systems which suggest them? From two different sources—the desire of explaining moral judgments, and the love of simplicity. It gratifies our taste for order to refer all virtues to a single one, of which they are but varieties, and to prove, by their partaking of this supreme virtue, that they all are virtues. But, if this theory was in harmony with truth, there would always be some first act imme-



diately recognized as good, without our being able to assign any other reason for it than that it is perceived to be so. Thus, on the one hand, the reason which proves it to be the supreme virtue, and therefore the true foundation of moral conduct, would remain unknown; and, on the other, though we should have a definition of the act immediately conceived to be good, still the idea of good conceived in this act would be indefinable. These various systems, therefore, fail of the double end at which they aim; they do not succeed, either in defining good, or in showing the foundation of morality.

Such, gentlemen, in a very abridged form, are the reasons by which Price supports the opinion that good is not susceptible of definition. In regard to these arguments, one reflection must have occurred to you, which is, that, from many of the reasonings, and from the theory of the author, as to the manner in which good is perceived, it would seem to result, that reasoning is of no use in morality, since each action is judged of instantly and by itself. This consequence of his ideas has not escaped the attention of Price, and I should be doing him injustice, not to inform you of the way in which he attempts to avoid it.

Two causes produce the difficulties which we meet with in our moral judgments, and explain the intervention of reasoning and of discussion upon the morality of acts. The first is the conflict that frequently arises between different duties; the second, the need of determining the attendant circumstances of actions, before deciding upon their character. Although in

both cases our judgment is the effect of the immediate conception of reason, still the nature of the question to be decided gives rise to discussions and all possible varieties of opinion; and as upon the exactness with which all the circumstances are determined, depends the justice of our moral estimates, various errors may easily be committed.

I have wished, gentlemen, to give you a clear idea of the manner in which Price supports his opinion as to the nature of good, and the fundamental question of its being definable. Upon other parts of his system I shall be more rapid.

Price shows that the intuition, by which the moral quality of acts is revealed, is followed by facts presupposing it, some of which are separate intuitions of reason, while others are facts of a mixed nature, at once rational and sensible.

To this latter class belongs the judgment which declares good actions to be beautiful and pleasing, and bad actions ugly and detestable. Is the agreeable emotion that good actions occasion in us a subjective fact only, that is to say, does it depend entirely upon the nature of our sensibility, or does it partake in any way of the objectivity of our moral ideas? Such is the question which Price suggests, and which he extends, successively, to many other of our natural affections. I can only indicate his conclusion, which is wholly original, and well worthy of a more thorough examination than I can now enter into. According to Price, among the pleasures experienced by our sensitive nature, there are some which are inexplicable, and which can be accounted for only by saying that

we are so constituted as necessarily to be thus affected; but there are others which seem to have their cause in the eternal nature of things, and which consequently appear to be produced, not as a result of the arbitrary constitution of our nature, but as a necessary consequence of the nature of the objects producing them. Such is the pleasure which the sight of virtue or of moral good occasions; and such, too, are the pleasures derived from the ideas of happiness, of order, and the like. In all such cases, the sensible effect appears to us essential to the nature of the object that produces it. Thus these objects produce, at first, a pleasure which is purely intellectual, and, as such, perfectly independent of our natural constitution. But this pleasure would be too cold to attract us powerfully towards its exciting cause; and God has willed, therefore, that it should be accompanied by another, which is more energetic, and has placed in us special instincts, which attract us to good, to order, and the like, and by reason of which all things affect us sensibly with greater energy. Good produces in us, therefore, two kinds of pleasure; one, purely intellectual, produced by the essence of good itself; the other, sensible and more energetic, derived from the arbitrary constitution of our nature. This theory is, I repeat, an ingenious one; and Price deduces from it an explanation of the happiness of God, which is equally so. Not having time to examine this theory in itself and in its consequences, I can only point it out to your attention. Another phenomenon of the same kind is that occasioned by the practice of good and of evil, that is to say, the pain of doing ill, and the

pleasure of doing well. But I cannot dwell on this point, and pass, therefore, at once to the *à priori* conceptions, which accompany, in our minds, the moral conception, properly so called, or the intuitive idea of good.

The first is that of duty or obligation. This is so closely connected with that of good, says Price, that one cannot arise without the other; or rather it may be said that they are two different forms of one and the same conception. To ask why we are obliged to do what is good, is absurd, for it is to ask why good is good, or why we ought to do what we ought to do. This being the case, it follows, that all the qualities of good are communicated to the obligation to do it; and as one is immutable and independent of the person perceiving it, that the other must be so too. Obligation partakes, therefore, of the objective reality of good; and if no power nor will can change what is good, neither can any will or power create, suppress, nor alter duty. It follows yet further, that duty cannot be resolved into the idea of the will or power of God, because it is not to the idea of will or power that the idea of obligation is attached, but to the idea of good; so that, before we can feel ourselves obliged to do what God wills, we must conceive that the will of God is identical with good. Such is the strength of the tie which unites the ideas of good and of obligation, that, being unable to conceive of a perfect perception of good in God, we are unable to think of him as subject to moral obligation, like ourselves. This view does not at all interfere with the idea of the omnipotence of God, as it is only saying that the

power of God is not competent to change his own nature, in which good is essential, and of which it is a mode. Another remark of Price is, that, if the idea of obligation is inherent in that of good, then is there no other law than good, and nothing can be a law except by its partaking of good. For, as the idea of law implies that of obligation, and that of obligation implies that of good, it follows that the first implies the third. Thus all the qualities attributed to law — its objectivity, its superiority to the individual, its immutability, and the like, — are all precisely the characteristics of good. Such is Price's view of the nature of obligation, and of the origin of the idea.

A second conception connected with the idea of good is, that its performance renders the agent worthy of happiness, and the practice of evil worthy of suffering; or, in other words, that virtue has merit and vice demerit. This conception is as immediate as the former one, for the idea of merit is no less essentially implied in that of virtue, than the idea of obligation is in that of good. This conception, says Price, is perfectly distinct from the fact that virtue is a source of pleasure; for it is one thing to learn by experience that virtue is accompanied by happiness, and another to conceive of it as a necessary truth, that virtue deserves happiness. Neither does this conception result from the view that virtue is useful to society; for even if this consideration inclines us to wish well to the virtuous man, we still are distinctly conscious that we are impelled to wish it, by an anterior consideration more direct and simple, which

is, that he is virtuous, and that virtue in itself is worthy of happiness.

Such is the description which Price has given of moral facts. The remainder of his work is principally devoted to two subjects: first, to a description of the actions in which we discover moral goodness; and secondly, to an examination of the difference between absolute virtue and practical virtue, and to an analysis of the faculties which render a being capable of virtue. I have not time to exhibit Price's doctrine upon these two secondary questions. It is sufficient to say that it offers nothing which is new, or which goes beyond the most simple conceptions of common sense. Consistently with his principle, that we conceive immediately of the good of every action, he denies that there is any one duty from which all others can be deduced, or, what amounts to the same thing, any one virtue, into which all others may be resolved, and limits himself to a simple enumeration of virtues. As to the second question, Price, like every body else, determines that liberty and intelligence are the necessary conditions for the performance of moral actions; and he makes a distinction, as other writers have done, between absolute virtue, which consists in doing, voluntarily and intelligently, acts which are conformable to the moral law, — and practical virtue, which consists in doing what we believe to be conformable to good, even when it is not. There is nothing here, as you may readily see, which has not been recognized and announced by all moral philosophers.

You will pardon me, gentlemen, that I have been

led, notwithstanding my promise of being rapid, into so detailed a description of the system of Price; for this writer gives so clear and orderly an exposition of all that is most essential in the rational system, that I have thought it better to avail myself of this opportunity to exhibit it to you as a whole. Once having thus set before you the type of all rational systems, it will be only necessary to point out the particulars in which other forms of the rational system differ from it; and these differences, as I have already said, are principally in relation to the nature of good, and to the possibility of defining it.

Before testing, however, by this fundamental question, other forms of the rational system, I will, in my next lecture, enter into a strict and thorough examination of the doctrine of Price.

## LECTURE XXII.

## THE RATIONAL SYSTEM.—CRITICISM OF PRICE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE object of my last lecture was to make you acquainted with the principal points of the moral system of Price. This system may be divided into two portions; the one negative, the other positive. The negative portion first demonstrates that the qualities of *good* are such as make the supposition impossible that they are derived from instinct, or from understanding, and then proves that the idea is communicated by intuitive reason. This negative portion I adopt unreservedly. The positive portion comprehends two branches; first, Price's opinion as to the nature of good, and the manner in which it is conceived; secondly, the description of the rational and sensitive phenomena which accompany this conception. I adopt, also, with some modifications, this latter portion of Price's positive system; but, as to the nature of good, and the manner in which it is revealed, my views are entirely different from his. And I propose, in this lecture, to describe the nature of this difference. It was precisely because I thus disagree with Price upon a question of such importance, that



I thought it my duty, in the preceding lecture, to make you fully acquainted with his system and arguments. One other reason also influenced me — that the opinion of Price upon this fundamental point has had great weight in his own country, where the doctrines of the Scottish school have made it popular. For the system of Price is, in fact, the system of Reid and of Dugald Stewart. Undoubtedly, these latter philosophers have enlarged the field upon which their predecessor entered, by introducing into their moral researches an examination of the laws and operations of self-love and of instinct. But, as to the moral problem, properly so called, they have regarded it from the same point of view, and have arrived, by the same road, at the same conclusions. A short description of the manner in which Stewart has answered this problem may suffice to establish this point. Allow me, for a moment, to dwell upon this; I will then pass to the critical examination, which I announced as the subject of the present lecture.

Stewart, in his "Outlines," of which I have published a translation, and also in his posthumous work upon the "Active and Moral Faculties of Man," which is to be translated, divides the fundamental problem of morality into two distinct questions, of which the first relates to the nature of good, and the second to the faculty which reveals it. These questions he successively examines.

His conclusions upon the first point are as follows: he affirms that the perception of actions is the occasion, when the idea of good arises within us; that this idea represents a particular quality of actions,

and the idea of evil the opposite quality ; that these qualities exist in actions, independently of ourselves, as primary qualities do in bodies, and that they do not arise from the simple relation of actions to us, as the secondary qualities of bodies do. As to the nature of these qualities, he declares, that, like our ideas of them, they are perfectly original, simple, irreducible, and, consequently, indefinable. And, following the examples of Price and of Reid, whom he quotes, he shows that we can define the words *good* and *evil* only by a use of synonymous phrases, or by substituting, for the ideas represented, some circumstance which accompanies their perception. Such are Stewart's opinions as to the nature of good.

In regard to the faculty by which good in acts is perceived, he says it must be sought in the incontestable facts as to the nature of good already established. And, after a review of the different opinions successively professed upon this point in England, he lays down the following conclusions:—First, that, as good is a simple and real quality in actions, the idea can be referred only to a faculty which communicates original ideas, and which is capable of seeing in things their inherent qualities ; secondly, that this idea cannot be referred to a sense similar in kind to taste and smell, because such senses do not reveal to us what things are in themselves, but simply the effects which they produce upon us ; thirdly, that neither can it be referred to reason, if by reason is understood only the faculty which perceives the relations of things, and deduces consequences from ideas already obtained, because the idea of good

is an original and primary idea, and not an idea of relation or consequence; fourthly, that, if by *sense* is meant a faculty analogous to that which perceives extension in bodies, and if by *reason* is understood intuitive reason, which gives us simple and original ideas of space, time, cause, the idea of good may be referred either to a sense or to reason; fifthly, that, as to a choice between these two sources of the idea, he inclines to adopt reason, though declaring, at the same time, that the question is of little importance, if it is once admitted that the words *good* and *evil* represent simple and real qualities of actions.

Such, gentlemen, is the doctrine of Stewart; and no commentary is needed to show that it is perfectly identical with that of Price. I pass at once, therefore, to the examination of this system, which was proposed as the subject of the present lecture.

There is but one way to determine its truth and value, and that is to compare it with the facts which it pretends to represent. Let me recall these facts, then, to your minds, in as few words as possible.

Observation attests, and reason conceives, that every human action must have a motive and an end. In seeking to determine what are the distinct ends of human action, we find that they may be reduced to three; first, the peculiar object of some one natural desire; secondly, the complete satisfaction of our whole nature, or the pleasure which accompanies this satisfaction; thirdly, that which is good in itself. We find also that all the distinct motives of human action may be reduced to three, which correspond to these three ends; first, some natural instinct; secondly, the

3 ~ desire of secondary formation, which we call self-love, or the desire of happiness ; thirdly, obligation. From these arise three distinct forms of volition, if we pass by those mixed forms which result from the possible combinations of these three ends and motives.

1 ~ This being premised, gentlemen, we apply the name of *good* to four ~~three~~ classes of things :—  
 2 ~ First, the objects of the different instincts of our nature—such as food, riches, power, glory, esteem, friendship—each of which we call good. *Good*, in this first acceptation, signifies whatever is fitted to satisfy some desire ; so that there are as many varieties of good as there are desires. Secondly, the greatest satisfaction of our nature ; which is, in other words, either its greatest good or its greatest happiness, according as we consider its satisfaction in itself, or the consequence of this, which is pleasure. Here, the word *good* represents no longer the object of a desire and its satisfaction, but the greatest satisfaction of all our desires. Different persons may understand this good in their own way, but each has the idea of such a good. 3 ~ Thirdly, good in itself. By *good*, in this last acceptation, we mean not that which is good in reference to ourselves, but that which is good independently of ourselves and of every human being ; good in itself, and absolutely. There can be but one such good as this, although there may be as many kinds of good of the second class as there are beings, and as many of the first as there are 4 ~ desires in individuals. Fourthly, the conformity of the voluntary action of a free and intelligent being to

absolute good. The word *good*, in this last acceptance, represents that quality of the conduct of intelligent and free individuals, which makes it conformable to absolute good. This is virtue, morality, moral good.

Thus you see, gentlemen, that the word *good* is used in our language in four different senses—and even five, if we make a distinction between the satisfaction of our desires and the accompanying pleasure. We might even say six, if we make another distinction between the true objects of our desires and the means proper to procure them, that is to say, things which are *useful*. But we will pass by these subdivisions, and employ the word in these four acceptations only. As these meanings are so different, you may well suppose that the things which they represent have not the same qualities, nor our ideas of them the same origin. Observe, therefore, the difference between them in fact.

1. Our instincts alone determine what is good and bad for us according to the first acceptance. Thus, if food, glory, power, are good for us, it is because our nature seeks these different ends. If we were otherwise constituted, these would not be good. They are a relative good, therefore; and because relative, only experience can make them known. This idea of good is empirical.

2. Reason learns from experience, that sometimes our nature is satisfied, and sometimes not; that sometimes it is more satisfied, and sometimes less. It learns also from experience to know what constitutes our greatest satisfaction, which evidently would vary

if our nature were changed. The idea of our highest natural good is therefore empirical, and this good, too, is relative.

3. Good in itself is not relative, because it is absolute. And, as observation cannot attain to the absolute, this idea of good in itself cannot possibly be derived from experience. Whatever object it represents, therefore, this idea is an *à priori* conception of reason.

4. Good in itself being once conceived, it is absolutely true that every action conformable to it is good. The idea of moral good is included, then, in this absolute conception. It is derived, therefore, from reason, and is absolute; and the good which it represents is equally so.

You will remark, gentlemen, that, of these four kinds of good, three are definite, of which we have a precise idea. These are instinctive good, personal good, and moral good. One alone is not so, namely, absolute good; and of this we now seek a definition. The two first are ends of action, but not, as we have proved, obligatory. Desire alone impels us to seek them. The third is also an end of action, and is the only one which is or can be obligatory. The fourth is the quality which determines conduct to the pursuit of this third and last-mentioned end.

Such are the facts, gentlemen — at least as they appear to me. Ethical systems become false by misconceiving or mutilating these facts. The system that mutilates them the most is the selfish system; for it entirely overlooks the distinctions now pointed out, and combines the various facts just described

into a voluntary and determined pursuit of personal good. The instinctive system is less at variance with the truth. It recognizes two ends and two motives — the end and motive of instinct, and the end and motive of self-love; — but, in all else, it misconceives the reality. The system of Price, gentlemen, comes much nearer to the truth. It recognizes three motives and three ends; but it gives a false description of the third, and alters its nature by overlooking the distinction between absolute good and moral good. It confounds these two facts, which, though united, are distinct, and forms of them a single fact, that retains the qualities of neither the one nor the other exclusively, and thus, by blending it, mutilates both. Here, as it seems to me, is the radical defect of the system of Price. Let me now describe, in a manner yet more distinct, the essential characteristics of his opinion and of my own, and the precise point in which they differ. We shall then be able to judge whether I make a distinction where none is to be found, or whether he overlooks one that actually exists.

According to Price, Cudworth, and Stewart, the idea of good is only an idea of a quality in actions recognized by intuitive reason; so that, beyond actions, there is nothing that is good, and, if there were no actions, good would cease to be. It can only exist in God as an idea, and this must be an idea of a possible quality of actions. Such is the opinion of these philosophers.

In my opinion, this is true only of moral good. I grant that the idea of moral good is the idea of a

certain quality in actions — a quality which really exists in them, and which my reason discovers. If there were no actions, this quality, and consequently moral good, would have no existence. The idea alone would exist, and this would be the idea of a possible quality of possible actions. But, in my opinion, moral good, or this particular quality, is not an intrinsic attribute of certain actions, as a round form is of certain bodies. It is, on the contrary, a relation existing between actions and an end, absolutely good in itself, to which these actions may or may not be directed, and by relation to which they are good when they tend towards it, and bad when they do not. This end is good in itself; it is the only absolute good, and whatever else is good derives this character merely from being related to it. This end is the reality which the word *good* represents; the idea of it is perfectly equivalent to the idea of good, and, in fact, these two ideas are identical. This reality exists independently of actions, for it is the legitimate end of every free action. Without it, actions would neither be good nor bad, since they are good and bad only by their relation to this end. So far, therefore, is it from being true, that the idea of good represents only a quality of actions, that goodness in actions should be rather said to be only derived — a goodness consisting in their conformity to that which is really represented by the idea of good, or, in other words, to that which alone is good in itself, and truly good. A distinction, therefore, must be made between absolute good and moral good. Absolute good is an end of action, as the satisfaction of our



nature is, or as the different objects sought by instinct are; but it is distinguished from every other end by this, that it is *good*, and consequently something to which we *ought* to aspire; while moral good or virtue is the quality which characterizes conduct and actions when they seek this end.

Cudworth, Price, and Stewart confound these two kinds of good. They see in good only a quality of actions, which is at once the source of their character of goodness, and the end to which they ought to be directed. Thus have I presented to your view the opinion of these philosophers and my own. You can readily detect the difference between them.

But I shall fail in giving you a perfect comprehension of this difference, unless I make you perceive that, according as we adopt one or the other of these opinions as to the nature of good, shall we be led, on the one hand, to different views of the manner in which it is conceived in itself and in actions; and, on the other, to different conclusions as to the possibility of defining it. Permit me to enter a little more into detail upon these two points.

In what way, according to my view, is good perceived? The process is as follows: As good and evil, in conduct and actions, depend upon their degree of conformity to absolute good, it is evident, that, in my opinion, they have no such character, unless the idea of this absolute good is conceived. It is on the occasion of actions, to be sure, that this idea of good is conceived, and the conception may be more or less clear in my mind; but, clear or obscure, this idea must still precede any judgment as to particular

actions. Thus, in my system, moral conceptions must necessarily originate in the idea of good in itself. If I have not this idea, I may, indeed, judge actions by the maxims of common sense, or by rules received from education; but I cannot truly judge them for myself. When once the idea of good, however, is conceived, I can at once estimate them by a comparison with absolute good. Every judgment of actions, therefore, is a perception of a relation, which is more or less visible, and, consequently, more or less easily determined. There is but one immediate conception, therefore, namely, that of absolute good; while every conception of moral good or evil, that is to say, every estimate of actions, is mediate; the conception of good in itself being the principle, and that of good in actions the consequence. Such, according to my view, is the necessary process in our minds.

Here Price differs from me. He thinks that when actions are perceived, we recognize at once their good or their evil. When I see a man stealing or giving alms to the poor, he argues, reason at once perceives that one of these actions is bad, and the other good. It discovers these qualities in them directly. Afterward we draw from this experience the general maxims, that to steal is bad, and to assist the needy is good; and later still, is disengaged from these general maxims the idea of good, either because we abstract it from the quality which it represents, as Price seems to think, or because the idea of this quality has a prior existence in our minds, as Cudworth supposes. Thus we begin by perceiving in actions the qualities of moral good and evil; next,

we deduce from these particular judgments general maxims, as tests for actions; and finally, we separate from these the idea of good. Such, in Price's view, is the way in which good is perceived. According to him, the estimate of particular acts is immediate, and the idea of good mediate. We are supposed, in this system, to begin, where, in my apprehension, we end. And this is the necessary consequence of our different views of the nature of good.

Another consequence—I will not say a necessary, but still a natural one—of this diversity is, the different opinion of Price and of myself, as to whether good is definable. You have seen, gentlemen, how the idea of Price, that good is something simple and irreducible, corresponds with his idea that good is only a quality of actions; and that, in my criticism upon this system, and upon all rational systems of the same class, I have been unable to separate their opinions upon these two points.

If my views of good in itself, of moral good, and of the manner in which the last is deduced from the first, are correct, is it not evident that I cannot avoid giving a definition of good? If I neither conceive of what it is, nor in what consists this external end which is absolutely good, which is the good, how can I determine whether actions do or do not tend toward it, and, consequently, whether they are, or are not, morally good? Evidently, this would be impossible; and the first condition of every precise moral judgment must, therefore, be a definition of good in itself. My system does not, then, admit that good is indefinable; and all moralists, who have adopted this sys-

tem, have attempted to give a definition of absolute good, and to determine this idea. And, as we shall hereafter see, these systems are distinguished from each other by the different definitions which they have given. But in Price's opinion, there is no necessity for such a definition. For as good, according to him, is a quality of actions, and a quality immediately perceived, it is no more necessary to define good, in order to judge whether actions are good, than it is necessary to define the nature of whiteness to determine whether objects are white. According to this form of the rational system, therefore, we are not compelled to give a definition of good. It is true, that, if this quality is really inherent in actions, the fact that it could be defined, and was defined, would not affect the system; but suppose that the system is false; suppose that good in actions is only their conformity to something exterior, even good in itself; then can we readily understand why philosophers, who have professed this form of the rational system, have preferred to say that good is simple and indefinable. Their only alternative was, either to define moral goodness, a conformity of acts to absolute good, or to say that it is impossible to form an idea of it. And as this only possible definition was opposed to their whole system, they were forced to exclude it, and had but one course to take, which was, to suppose and declare that moral goodness is a simple and indefinable quality.

You see, then, that the difference between my opinion and that of Price, that is to say, the difference between the rational systems, which define good, and

those which do not, embraces three points — the nature of good, the perception of good, and the definition of good; and you see also how closely these three points are united, and, therefore, how necessarily a difference upon either one leads to a difference upon the two others. My criticism, therefore, must extend to Price's opinions upon these three points; otherwise it will not be complete.

I will attempt two things; first, to explain, on the supposition that my view is correct, how distinguished philosophers have been led to adopt the opinion represented by the system of Price; and secondly, to show in what particulars this opinion is irreconcilable with facts. I will begin with the first-mentioned point.

And first, it is easy to explain, historically, how Price and the Scottish philosophers were led to adopt this opinion. For this end, it will be sufficient to describe the opinions and prejudices under the influence of which they wrote, and the task, which, as philosophers, they undertook. This task was imposed upon thinkers by Locke's theory of the origin of our ideas. As there are in the human mind many fundamental ideas, which represent neither what is observed by the senses or by consciousness, nor any existing relation perceived by these two faculties, all ideas and all truths connected with them were found to be involved in doubt by his theory. It stirred deeply, therefore, all reflecting minds; and it was to determine these ideas, that, during a whole century, English philosophy, and the philosophy of a part of the continent, directed their efforts. Philosophers had this

alternative, either to explain the existence of these ideas according to the theory of Locke, or to deny this theory, and to prove that it did not recognize all the sources of human knowledge. Of these two modes of refutation, it was natural that the former should be first attempted, and the latter afterwards tried; and this was what actually happened. Hence, if I may say so, the philosophers who have undertaken this task are divided into two classes—Hutcheson, belonging to the first, Price and the Scottish philosophers, to the second. How did Hutcheson proceed in this work? As I have already told you, he did not deny the theory of Locke, but merely attempted to show that we have other senses besides those usually recognized, and among these, one which perceives the qualities of moral good and evil in actions. Thus, admitting that good and evil are perceived by a sense, Hutcheson was bound also to admit that they are qualities, and simple qualities; for this was demanded by the theory of Locke. It was agreed, therefore, that good and evil are simple qualities of actions. Hutcheson believed, that, by this theory, he had preserved these ideas; and one point he had, indeed, secured. The only good, of which the idea was compatible with the theory of Locke, was pleasure, or personal good. Hence the system of selfishness. Hutcheson, by the discovery of the moral sense, succeeded, as he thought, in showing that there was another good beside personal good—a good desired for itself, and not as an element of our own good. He thus believed that he had done all that was necessary. But this was by no means enough; and Hutcheson, compelled, by the

impossibility of defining the essential nature of good, to assimilate it more to the secondary than to the primary qualities of matter, did not perceive that his theory made good relative to ourselves, and liable to change if we should change. Human consciousness demanded something more ; and it was to this second appeal that Price replied. His object, as I have already shown, was, to establish the objectivity, and, consequently, the immutability, of good and evil. And thus was he led to see that the theory of Locke is false, and that reason is the source of primary ideas. But, as it often happens, his first and principal thought being realized, every thing else seemed of secondary importance ; and it was the same with the Scottish philosophers, who were his fellow-laborers, and who sought the same end. Thus he accepted the idea so long prevalent, that good and evil are the qualities of actions, and simple and indefinable qualities. So deeply was the prejudice, that all the fundamental ideas of the human mind are single, rooted by the influence of Locke's theory, that even his opponents were insensibly influenced by it ; and Price was unwilling to admit that the ideas of good and evil belonged to an inferior class, and made light of their being ideas of relation. Such were the circumstances by which Price was led to adopt the opinion that I now oppose. You see, then, in relation to him at least, its historical origin.

But this opinion actually arises from causes of a much more general kind, and which, independently of any historical circumstances, might naturally lead

philosophers to adopt it. These I will rapidly describe.

If the discoveries of reflection belonged to those alone who reflected, science, instead of being a source of happiness and perfection to the human race, would benefit only the few who cultivated it, and thus would become, by successive augmentations, a possession which the many could never enjoy. But this is not the case. In proportion as science advances, truths which are brought to light, having undergone long examinations, pass into less enlightened minds, and finally become a common property, shared by all — by shepherds as well as kings, and by the ignorant as well as the learned. Yet more ; by a wise law of Providence, in thus becoming a universal patrimony, they lose their scientific character, and being gradually detached from the arguments by which they were at first supported, are at last established in the common faith as axioms. It is under this simple form that they are transmitted from fathers to children, so that the heritage of truth may be indefinitely increased, without ever becoming too heavy a burden for the common mind. Thus, gentlemen, from age to age is augmented that science enjoyed by all, which we call common sense, and which does not wear a scientific aspect, only because we receive it in our nurses' arms, and breathe it in from the spirit of our times. If we should analyze the truths which, in any nation or time, the common sense possesses, we should find that they are composed of two elements ; first, of a few innate articles of faith, which are in some



sort the intellectual capital, received at birth as a gift from God to all men ; and secondly, of numberless truths, which, successively acquired by reflection through preceding generations, have gradually become a part of this common stock. We must remark yet further, that these latter ideas, although at first admitted only upon good proofs, become in time confounded with the former, and appear, like them, to be self-evident axioms, for which there neither is nor can be any proof, and which it would be foolish to deny, since the day is long since forgotten, when they were first announced, discussed, and recognized. Thus, gentlemen, are the ideas of common sense multiplied ; and such are the laws by which the world is advanced and improved, and every body in society more or less enlightened. Thus, finally, are explained the differences between different communities ; and thus is the fact accounted for, that the common sense of some nations is richer in ideas than that of others.

If this is the case with all kinds of truths, must it not be equally so with moral truths, on the supposition already made, and which, I do not hesitate to say, is agreeable to facts — that the estimate of actions arises from a recognition of their relation to a certain end, which is good, and which is immediately conceived ? What other class of truths is it so important for a man to determine ? To what other class would reflection be directed at an earlier period, or with more constant attention ? In regard to what other truths, consequently, should we expect discoveries to be so ancient and so numerous, especially when we add the consideration that, on account of their import

ance, Providence has rendered them easy of apprehension? What other class of truths, in fine, can furnish to the common sense more maxims and axioms? If my hypothesis is well founded, gentlemen, the history of the progress of moral ideas is as follows: As civilization advances, the human mind successively discovers that certain actions are conformable to absolute good. In proportion as these discoveries are made, maxims are adopted by common sense, which declare certain actions to be good or bad. Gradually, the reasons on which they rest are forgotten, and these maxims assume the appearance of axioms, which express immediate, primary, and self-evident truths. A proof, that there is such a progress of ideas, is the fact that it is not necessary to trace far back the history of our civilization, to find an era when the judgments of men were unsettled in regard to actions, whose moral character is, in our day, perfectly determined; and yet another proof may be found in the fact, that, when we compare together any two successive eras in the history of civilization, we always find greater or less difference between the popular ideas of morality adopted in them. Now, what inference is to be drawn from the phenomenon now described? We may infer that, in an advanced stage of civilization, — in such an age as our own, for example, — the moral character of most actions will be perfectly determined, and that judgment will be pronounced upon them directly, and without any previous comparison with absolute good. And hence — to make a remark in passing — arises the facility with which the moral taste of a people may be for a time perverted upon a given

point; and hence, too, the shock which all moral truths receive, in eras when truths of another kind, which, equally with them, have become ideas of common sense, are disputed. And now, to illustrate this reasoning, I will ask, Whoever denies that to steal is bad? or inquires why it is so? It seems to us all, as if the moral evil of dishonesty is perceived naturally and immediately, and as if this evil resided in the action itself. Now, as the same facts produce the same effects in a multitude of instances, this illusion assumes, at last, the appearance and authority of truth; and it is increased yet more by the facts that the philosopher finds his own moral judgments produced in the same process which he observes in others. In fact, we begin to philosophize at a period of life when the judgments of common sense have penetrated our minds, and are established there. Our heads are filled with notions already established as to the character of different actions, and our judgments upon them are often immediate. What is more natural, therefore, than that we should mistake this process, which we see going on all around us, and of which we are conscious ourselves, for the true, natural, and primitive mode of moral appreciation? And this mistake is actually made, — we either forget the exceptions, — that is to say, the difficult cases in which we are obliged to return to the true mode of moral judgment, — or else we explain them away; and we overlook the consideration, that, by the same reasoning, we should be obliged to regard also as immediate a multitude of truths, which were certainly once acquired, although they have now become axioms. This illusion

masters us, and we adopt the opinion which Price has expressed in his system. Such is the first, and a very powerful cause of the theory that the idea of good is simple.

A second cause, gentlemen, also resulting from a law of the human mind, is the form in which moral truths are necessarily expressed in the precepts of education and in the laws. Our parents and teachers do not say, This is good and that is bad, for such and such reasons. They say simply, This is good, that is bad; and the chief reason why they do so is, that it would be difficult for them to give the proof, which they omit, having never themselves received it, nor reflected upon it. But a second reason is, the manner in which all laws and moral precepts must be expressed to exert their proper influence, that is to say, to be immediately and clearly comprehended. If laws and precepts should proceed by demonstration, they would say, This is absolute good; such actions, under such circumstances, are conformable to this good; you ought, therefore, to perform them. But this would evidently make the law too long, and the precept embarrassing. It is much more simple to say, You must do this, and you must not do that; or, This is good, that is bad; without explaining why, or without referring, for a sanction of the law, either to the authority of common sense, on which it rests, or to the obscure view of absolute good which exists in every human mind, and secretly confirms the force of whatever is true in morals, while it as secretly impairs the force of what is false. Thus, gentlemen, the natural, and, in some sort, the necessary form in

which all laws and precepts are expressed, seems to place good and evil immediately in actions, and to declare that they are only qualities, and that only from a perception of actions do we receive these ideas. Such is the second cause of illusion which conspires to make us adopt the opinion entertained by these philosophers.

Still more powerful causes may be found in the manner in which the conception of absolute good is naturally formed, and in which actions are morally appreciated.

And, first, gentlemen, although no two things are more distinct than absolute good and moral good, — one being an end independent of actions, and the other a quality of the acts which are conformed to this end, — it must still be said, that, in many cases, the appreciation of this quality is most readily made; so that the conception and judgment are closely united, and included even in one and the same act of the mind. Thus has Providence preserved from misapprehension the acts which form, from their frequent recurrence, the substance of conduct; and, although every precaution has been taken in our natural constitution to guard instinct and self-love from errors as to these actions, still the guaranty of the moral judgment could not be omitted, when so important a result was at stake. Thus we find that the moral character of these acts is entirely fixed among all people, with but few slight differences of opinion; and not an era could be found in which their worth was completely undetermined. This fact has deceived philosophers in a twofold manner. In the first place,

as these facts occur most readily to the mind in the study of ethics, they are naturally selected by preference for illustration; and, as they have been appreciated in the same way among all people, from time immemorial, they seem to offer a proof that moral appreciation is immediate. In the second place, as the phenomenon of moral appreciation has been studied in these very acts, in which it is most readily made, philosophers have met with only what appeared to favor the view of its being immediate, and thus have been confirmed in their opinion.

But, again, gentlemen, actions are the occasions on which we rise to the idea of absolute good, as events are the occasions when we conceive of time and cause. This is the general law of intuitive reason already described. Although capable of conceiving certain ideas immediately, some circumstance must always be the occasion of their being formed; and this circumstance must always be a fact which, to be comprehended or appreciated, implies the very *à priori* idea that reason conceives on the occasion of this event. In looking upon facts which succeed each other, or in touching the different parts of a body, we cannot comprehend the fact of succession without the idea of time; nor that of parts united together, without the idea of space. Therefore is it necessary that reason should interpose, and, by introducing these ideas of time and space, render possible the ideas of succession and of extension. It is the same with the idea of good in relation to the morality of actions. Without this idea, the moral quality of actions could not be conceived. Thus it is on the

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 See Cousin's Remarks on  
 physical & philosophical antecedents

occasion of actions, when we feel ourselves called to pass judgment, that reason ascends to the idea of good, by which these judgments become possible. In this case, as in all analogous ones, we are more struck by the particular judgment passed than by the idea then introduced into our minds, which enables us to pass it. Frequently, we even do not notice this idea at all. Thus, when facts are seen to succeed each other, we judge that they are successive by means of the idea of time, which then enters our minds. What strikes us is, the judgment that they are successive; but the idea of time, and the part which it performs in this act of judgment, escape us; and this is the reason why many philosophers have pretended that the idea of time has its origin in the fact of succession, and is but an abstraction of this fact—not remarking what a paralogism it is to derive an idea from a fact, in the very notion of which it is presupposed. Thus, for the same reasons, it has been said of the idea of space, that it is derived, by abstraction, from that of extended bodies; as if, without the idea of space, we could have conceived of extension! It is quite natural that philosophers should have fallen into the same paralogism in relation to the idea of good. As we conceive this idea on the occasion of beholding actions, and in order to form a judgment of actions, the act of judging has been remarked, while only a slight attention has been paid to the psychological phenomenon of the judgment itself, and of the idea which it presupposes. Hence the opinion that the idea of good is a quality of actions, and that it is deduced, by abstraction, from successive

estimates of actions — an opinion akin to those already described, as to the origin of the ideas of time and space.

And do not think, gentlemen, because the appreciation of an action by this idea can only result from a relation conceived between the end, which is good, and the tendency of the action, that it follows that the analogy indicated is not exact, and that this inattention to the idea of good, the principle of the judgment, and to the comparison produced by it, is impossible. Without doubt, whenever an accurate mind wishes to attain a clear idea of the quality of an action, and to find a precise reason for its judgment, the idea, and the comparison between the action and this idea, must be both present to consciousness. But this is not what commonly takes place, even among sensible minds, who seek correctness in their moral judgments, and are unwilling to be governed by the influences of education and of common sense. And this arises from another quality of the intuitive idea, and of the judgments derived from it, which I have already had occasion often to notice. It is the peculiarity of these ideas, which we find already in our minds when we begin to reflect, and for whose appearance we cannot assign a date, that, while confused in our apprehension, they nevertheless give rise to judgments which are positive, though also confused. I will not now reconsider the causes of this fact, which seems to imply a contradiction, for I have already described them. But the fact itself is undeniable. For example, it is certain that, although we have, in general, only a confused idea of the reality represented by the word *good*, and although we should,



for the most part, feel embarrassed in attempting to describe its true nature, we nevertheless, in most instances, say with assurance — and not merely in the name of the maxims of common sense, and of long-established opinion, but with the consciousness of truth — that an action is or is not conformable to good — is or is not morally good. There is no one who has not often experienced this in his deep deliberations upon the conduct proper to be observed in the important events of life. Every one manifests his consciousness, at such times, by the care which he takes to guard his mind from the influence of feeling, interest, and prejudice, that it is not by the light of these motives that he can truly judge of actions. Every one is conscious that there exists in the recesses of his mind a dim idea, and, in the nature of things, a high and impersonal end, the type of absolute good, by their relations to which, it can alone be determined whether acts should or should not be done. Every one has felt, even in cases where this end did not clearly appear, that there would come a time when the conformity or nonconformity of actions to it would be seen as an unquestionable absolute certainty, and be followed by an unhesitating resolve, at once clear and strong. This phenomenon, which is accompanied by painful efforts in complex cases, occurs easily in simple ones; and, if the reasons by which our judgment is determined are obscure in the former, they are hardly remarked at all in the latter; so that, although our moral estimates emanate from a presupposed idea, and are the result of a comparison of actions with that idea,

it is still true that the idea and comparison may remain obscure, even when the judgment is distinct and strong. There is no contradiction, then, in supposing, that it is the same in relation to moral judgments as to all others, which imply a conception of intuitive reason; and that, in these judgments, it is the particular result that strikes our attention, while the universal idea which produces it is hidden or overlooked. We have already described this fact as one cause of the opinion that the goodness of actions is apprehended by a sense; and, for similar reasons, it has led some rational philosophers to accord with the view of Price.

And, were it not for the fact—to which I may, in passing, call your attention—that the objectivity of good is preserved by the one, and destroyed by the other, it would be difficult to perceive any true difference between these two systems; in all other respects they are perfectly identical. Both consider good a quality of actions. Both consider this quality simple and indefinable. Both say that it is immediately perceived or revealed. Both, consequently, confound absolute good and moral good. And both make the idea of particular good acts precede the idea of good in itself. Both obtain this latter idea, therefore, by abstraction and generalization. And both make the use of reasoning, in determining moral qualities, impossible. We need not be surprised, then, that Stewart considers his opinion so nearly assimilated to that of Hutcheson, and that he makes so little account of the differences which distinguish them, and of the question as to the origin of the

idea of good. This conduct of Stewart is easily explained; and, had it not been for the danger which the immutability of moral distinctions was seen to incur from the system of Hutcheson, just then promulgated, it may readily be believed that Price would have preceded Stewart in this strong expression of sympathy for the instinctive system. H

I will only point out one further cause, which has given rise to the opinion of Price; it is suggested by the remarks already made in the description of the part performed by instinct in the moral life.

We should never overlook, in our attempts to explain the erroneous systems of moral philosophers, the complexity of human nature, and the multiplicity of the motives which conspire to impel us to good, and to deter us from evil. And, although this frequent review of the same facts may be tedious, you must permit me to make it, from considering that this series of systems is a gallery of portraits of a single original, of whose fidelity we can judge only by a comparison with this original. I repeat, therefore, that, long before we begin to form moral estimates of actions by reason, we are impelled to the good, and deterred from the evil, by the strong impulse of natural instinct, soon seconded by the calculations of interest. Thus, duplicity and injustice are repugnant to us before we conceive that they are immoral. Endowed with the faculty of expressing our thoughts, it cannot be our natural instinct to disguise them. Born with a desire of independence, and with the sense of property, we cannot, without a feeling of aversion, permit ourselves to be robbed; and, whenever we see others

robbed or ill-treated, by means of the sympathy which Smith has so well described, we place ourselves in their situation, and feel indignation with them and for them. Thus, when we first begin to reason upon moral subjects, we already reverence good and detest evil; and our inward nature recognizes, by a strong and lively sentiment, the qualities in actions which reason afterwards reveals. Two results arise from this fact; first, our moral estimates are more readily made, and thus prevented from rising to distinctness; and, next, they are accompanied by a strong sentiment, with which they are intermingled, and, in some sense, incorporated, and from which it is difficult to distinguish them. And now compare together these two circumstances—on the one hand, the natural obscurity of the idea of good, when first perceived by reason, and, on the other, the primitive estimates which instinct forms of the actions whose character this idea is intended to determine—and you will readily comprehend why men are contented with the glimpse of the moral character of actions derived from the sentiment, which speaks so loudly, without making great efforts to see more distinctly what their whole nature confirms and proclaims. On the other side, gentlemen, do you not see that it is difficult, in this phenomenon, where sentiment and judgment, instinct and reason, are blended together, to distinguish the part performed by the latter? and yet more difficult to perceive the ideas from which it sets out, and the mode in which it proceeds? Do you not see that the prevalent, visible element is sentiment? and that it envelops, as it were, the other? Do you

not see that, in thus mingling with, advancing, and strengthening the judgment, it gives it the appearance of an immediate perception? Do you not see how probable it is that the philosopher who regards this phenomenon will look upon it as altogether a sensible one? and, even if he disengages its two elements, that he will still suppose the rational one to be an immediate perception? and, finally, if he does discern and distinguish the presupposed idea, that still he will not discover its true nature, when so many circumstances distract his attention, and prevent him from thoroughly comprehending so complicated a phenomenon? This at once explains why the instinctive system has found so many supporters, and has preceded every where the rational system; and why, among those who have risen to this latter view, so many have stopped at the opinion that good is an immediate perception; and why, finally, among those who have perceived the distinction between moral good and absolute good, the most have misconceived, in a greater or less degree, the real idea.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the causes, which, by their common tendency to make us consider moral appreciation an immediate perception, have conspired to conceal from the view of philosophers its true elements and nature. Although different, and even opposed in nature, the facts now described are far from excluding each other. There enter into our judgment of actions instinctive impulses, prejudices of education, the sentiment of good and evil. All

these are mingled together in proportions infinitely diverse. And, as all these different principles converge to one end, they act together like a single impulse, and in the profound conviction which they produce, are so blended that we do not distinguish them apart. It is only in cases where they diverge, and where their apparent unity dissolves, that we separate them from one another. Each then appears under its own proper form. Instinct acts with the blind energy of an impulse; prejudice speaks with the authority of the axioms received from common sense; moral judgment, in the name of that idea which emanates from reason, the source of all truth and light. Then only does this phenomenon of moral appreciation, pure and separate from all that usually is mingled with it, appear in its own character; and then only have we an opportunity to discover its true nature and real elements. If, then, on the one hand, each element by itself, and all combined, tend to make us believe that the perception of good in actions is immediate, and if, on the other, even when the phenomenon of appreciation is separated from those with which it is usually allied, and acts alone, there yet are in the laws of the human mind reasons why many of its elements should remain half-hidden, and why it should still preserve the appearance of immediate perception—it becomes plain why so many philosophers have thus described it. This is precisely what I have attempted to make clear in the present lecture.

I had hoped, gentlemen, in addition to this ex-

planation, to have entered upon a discussion of the system of Price; but, as I am unwilling to give a partial description of the facts which seem to me to prove its incorrectness, I will postpone the whole discussion till we meet again.

## LECTURE XXIII.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

To appreciate at its just value the opinion of Price as to the nature of good, let us consider it in itself, without taking note of those paralogisms by which he has succeeded, at least in appearance, to bring it into harmony with facts. When once we see the consequences to which this doctrine leads, we shall comprehend the secret necessity by which its author was led into these paralogisms. We can then unveil his delusion, and draw from it a final proof, furnished by himself, that the system which made them necessary is an erroneous one.

What is the essential doctrine of this system, and on what is it founded? I have already told you. It consists in pretending that the idea of *good* represents, in the human mind, only a quality of actions — a simple and indefinable quality, immediately perceived or conceived, in each case, by reason. This doctrine includes two distinct propositions; the one fundamental, which affirms that nothing is good in itself except actions; the other secondary, which declares that goodness is a simple quality, and that



it is immediately perceived. In my last lecture, I showed you how these two propositions were connected together, and how, when the first is admitted, the second necessarily and naturally follows. To-day, we are to inquire whether these propositions are true. If they are, they must be, both in themselves and in their consequences, in harmony with facts. Let us compare them, then, with these facts, and let us begin with an examination of the second.

We will admit, then, with Price, gentlemen, that moral goodness is a simple quality of actions, and that it is immediately discovered, either by an intuition of reason, as he supposes, or by a perception of moral sense analogous to perceptions of primary qualities of matter, which is the alternative left open by Stewart. And now let us consider a few of the consequences which result from either of these suppositions.

The first and most prominent consequence is, that the moral appreciation of actions gives room for no exercise of reasoning. For, I ask, where can reasoning find entrance? Not in the question whether an action is good or bad; because this discovery is given by intuition or immediate perception. Not in the question as to the degree in which an action is good, or whether it is more or less good than another; for, on the one hand, we cannot conceive of degrees in a simple quality, and, on the other, if these degrees are conceived to exist as they do in the color or hardness of bodies, they would be as immediately perceived as the quality itself. Now, besides these two questions, I can imagine no others which can arise in our moral appreciations; and as,

*Reasoning  
excluded.*

?

according to this hypothesis, both are resolved intuitively, it follows that reasoning is entirely excluded.

*discussion*  
*conclusion*  
*excluded*  
But, if reasoning cannot enter into moral judgments, neither can discussion or demonstration find place there. For, I ask you, on what point could a discussion be raised? and how could it be directed to establish any result? Here is an action: suppose that you think it good, while to me it seems bad: how shall either of us convince the other that he is wrong? If this could be done, it would follow that the opinion of each was founded upon reasons, because each would bring forward reasons in its support; but these opinions are founded on immediate perception. All that you could say, therefore, would be, simply, that your reason immediately discovers moral goodness in this action. To this assertion I should reply, that my reason immediately perceives moral evil in it; and here the whole discussion would terminate, just as it would in the case of two men, one of whom thought that an object was white, and the other that it was red. In so far as it is an immediate perception, demonstration and discussion can do nothing to establish it. On the one hand, we can demonstrate to others only that which has been demonstrated to ourselves, and we can offer no reasons for convincing others of an idea which was not itself derived from reason; and, on the other, it is absurd to discuss points which cannot be demonstrated, when the very object of discussion is to arrive at a demonstration.

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Yet more, gentlemen; the hypothesis of Price makes it impossible to conceive that there should be

a difference of opinion in morality. As each action has, by its nature, a moral character, which is immutable, and as this character is immediately perceived by reason, it is impossible that reason should see in it an opposite character which has no existence. One man, therefore, can never consider as evil what another thinks good; or else reason would be essentially different in different human beings. It is equally impossible that one should perceive and another not perceive the goodness or evil of actions. For that which is immediately intelligible or perceptible can be conceived or perceived by all men alike. It can never happen, therefore, that a man should consider an action indifferent, which others esteem either good or bad. Thus the hypothesis of Price excludes from morality not only reasoning, demonstration, and discussion, but, yet more, it excludes the possibility of different opinions.

But, if this is true, gentlemen, what is the consequence? It is as follows—that all men are equally capable of appreciating the morality of actions, and consequently equally enlightened in moral judgment; that, in this respect, therefore, there can be no difference between the learned and the ignorant, and the men of different ages; that moral science consequently cannot be developed nor improved with the progress of civilization, but that savages must be equally well informed with ourselves; that the morality of no action can be proved or deduced from that of other actions, and consequently that morality cannot be reduced to a system, or taught; and, finally, that what we call *ethics* cannot be a

*The  
Consequence*

science, or, if it is so, that it can be nothing more than a catalogue of actions, discovered by reason to be good or bad. Such, gentlemen, are some of the consequences which flow from this hypothesis. Neither of these propositions can be denied, if it is true that good is a simple quality of actions immediately perceived. They are all either derived directly from this hypothesis, or are strict corollaries of the propositions which we have deduced from it.

*now I call*  
*immediate*  
*intuitions*  
You will please to remark, gentlemen, that, in attributing to the opinion of Price and Stewart these various consequences, I only impose on the intuition or immediate perception of good the laws which govern all other immediate intuitions of reason and immediate perceptions of sense. Review, on the one hand, the immediate perceptions of sense, such as extension, impenetrability, solidity, form; and, on the other, the immediate intuitions of reason, such as the idea of place in relation to bodies, of time in relation to events, of cause in relation to whatever begins to be, of substance in relation to attributes, of the permanence of the laws of nature whenever we see any thing happen many times — review, I say, these intuitions and these perceptions, and see whether what I have said of the morality of actions is not true of whatever these perceptions and these intuitions reveal. Do men reason, offer proofs, or dispute about them? Is it necessary to teach them to children? Is there any man who has not these ideas? Are they different in different persons? Are they differently developed in different minds? Have not all persons these notions and convictions alike, under the same

circumstances? Is there a savage in the woods of New Holland, or a peasant on our mountains, who does not believe, equally with the greatest philosopher, in all that these perceptions and intuitions teach? Can any progress, any revolutions of opinion whatever, be discovered in the ideas of the human race upon these notions? We must, then, either say that the intuition or perception of good in actions is not subject to the law which governs all other immediate intuitions of reason and immediate perceptions of sense, or admit, that, in deducing from the opinion of Price these consequences, I have been just to his principle; and that, in adopting the hypothesis that good is a simple quality immediately perceived in actions, we cannot legitimately deny any of these consequences.

Now, gentlemen, is it necessary to do more than announce these consequences, to show that they are entirely opposed to the moral facts, which the observation of human nature presents? Parents do not teach their children that bodies are extended, solid, round, square, white, or red; but they do teach them that some actions are good and others bad, and do seek to explain why they are so. We never see men discussing the questions, whether an effect had a cause, or whether a body is hard or soft; but we do every day see them disputing whether an action is good or bad. Their language is not only, Look and see, but they reason, they argue, they bring proofs, as if the actual existence of this simple quality, so immediately perceived, could be established. We do not find that the men of one era or of one nation

understand better than others time, space, or the simple qualities of bodies; but we do see that a knowledge of the moral qualities of actions is at a different stage of advancement in different ages and countries. Finally, in the same country and age, we do not see individuals differing in their capacity of determining whether objects are round or square, blue or red, solid or liquid, while the universal judgment declares that some individuals are more competent to judge of actions than others, and all men manifest this conviction by consulting some, while they disregard the opinion of others, on the pretext of their want of intelligence upon such subjects.

But let us enter now into a more detailed comparison of certain facts with the hypothesis of Price, and we shall see yet more clearly that it is necessarily and evidently false.

It frequently happens that two duties are opposed to each other. For example, I may be so situated, that, by acting in a certain way, I may render my country a service, while at the same time I endanger my family. Now, how, in such cases, do we determine what is right? Experience at once tell us that it is by reasoning. But how would reasoning avail, according to the opinion of Price? It is impossible to divine. Reason perceives moral goodness in my benefiting my family. It perceives goodness equally in my desire to be useful to my country. A moral quality, and, consequently, a duty, is recognized in both these acts, and is equally simple and irreducible in both. How shall I decide? How determine this conflict? To do so, I need a higher standard by

which to measure them both ; whereas, according to the hypothesis, I have no such standard. The one act is good, and so also is the other, and both are equally so ; and there is no pretext for supposing that the goodness of the one is superior to that of the other. And even if we should admit degrees in moral goodness, as in whiteness, this difference would still be immediately perceived, and there would be no need for reasoning. But experience testifies that we do reason in these cases ; and do, by reasoning, determine which duty is to be preferred. From such instances, it may readily be perceived that moral goodness is not an intrinsic quality of actions, but a relation of actions to something else. For these conflicts between duties are decided, and decided after examination ; and we feel distinctly in what this examination consists. It consists in ascending to the principle of all morality, to that end, by their relation to which actions are good, and in determining which of these actions tends most to realize it. Here is the key to the enigma ; but we cannot find it in the system of Price.

And neither can we find in this system an explanation of what happens, when, instead of cases in which it has long been determined what conduct is proper, a rare and unaccustomed situation presents itself, to which established rules do not apply ; or when a moral opinion, admitted for centuries, as, for instance, the propriety of slavery, is first attacked. For, I ask, why, in the first case, should there be hesitation, and an anxious search for truth ; and why, in the second, should these reasonings and discussions

be prolonged, and the human mind left for centuries in doubt, between what it has believed, and what it ought to believe? In my opinion, the answer is simple. In the first case, the situation being unwonted, and, consequently, the conduct which is conformed to absolute good undetermined, we need time to consider it; and in the second, the error of the human race is explained by the consideration that men may be deceived as to the true relation of an action to absolute good. The discovery of this error in the minds of some, and the contest between the old opinion and the new, and the painful toil of deciding the question by a comparison of these opinions with absolute good, are also easily explained. But all these points remain unaccounted for by the hypothesis of Price. Whether a situation is or is not an unaccustomed one, there is always a choice between two courses of conduct, each of which has a moral character; and this character is an inherent quality which reason is as capable of recognizing, as the eye is of perceiving whiteness in bodies. It is not readily seen how the fact that an action is new or common can affect the facility of the perception. Is the eye more perplexed in perceiving whiteness in a body seen for the first time than in one which is familiar? Not at all; and in the same way would the moral character of the most unaccustomed act, in the most novel situation, be as readily perceived, according to the hypothesis of Price, as that of the most ordinary action. And even if it should be admitted that there might be hesitation, it could nowise be granted that reason would be of service in removing our doubts;



for no one reasons as to the simple qualities of bodies, immediately perceived; they either are or they are not; and we either do or do not perceive them. This is all. Reasoning has nothing further to do. Thus the grand science of casuistry, which has occupied moralists in all time, can have no possible meaning, according to this hypothesis, and must be an illusion of the human mind. All that I have now said applies with equal force to revolutions of human opinion as to the moral quality of particular acts. On the one hand, it is not easy to comprehend how, according to the opinion of Price, there can be error in moral judgments; for to this we can find nothing analogous; and, on the other, it is not easy to see how any discussion can take place. All controversy would resolve itself necessarily into two opposing affirmations; the one party saying, This action appears to us good; the other, It appears to us bad; but without either the one or the other being able to bring any proof of their respective assertions; for this the doctrine we are considering does not suppose possible in moral judgments.

You see, gentlemen, how far the consequences of the doctrine of Price extend. You see that they do no less than contradict the fact of the progress of humanity in moral science. I cannot forbear to dwell a moment upon this fact of the progress of the human race, because it is experience on a wide scale, such as cannot be denied, and which has infinitely more authority than private experience. What is the testimony of this experience? It bears witness to a progress in moral science, as much as in the science

of astronomy. Take any people in the savage state, and draw a comparison between their moral ideas and ours. Unquestionably, you will find them less developed. You will find that upon many points, as to which our consciences have no doubt, the conscience of the savage hesitates. And you will find that his judgments upon many other points are in manifest contradiction to ours. Compare the least and most civilized nations of Europe together, or ancient times with modern, and you cannot but remark the same differences, all attesting this progress. Nothing is more evident than that the moral character of different actions does thus become more clearly recognized, and more firmly established, and, therefore, that moral science, like all other science, is progressive. Price himself does not deny this, and Stewart formally acknowledges it. Now, I repeat, according to the hypothesis of Price, this is inexplicable; and quite as inexplicable is also the fact that judges often absolve criminals, or at least lighten the penalties inflicted by the law, from the consideration that their minds are but partially enlightened. For, however this hypothesis may be understood,—whether it is said, with Price, that the discovery of good in actions is an intuition of reason, or whether, with Stewart, we adopt the alternative, that it is an intuition of reason or a perception of moral sense,—I have still shown that all analogies contradict any explanation which it can give of these facts.

I should not stop here, gentlemen, if I thought it worth while to compare with the opinion of Price all the particular facts with which it is incompatible.

I might make a long list of these; but the details into which we have already entered, are sufficient, and much remains yet to be done. I have proved that Price's second proposition, that good is a simple quality of actions, immediately perceived, is in itself untenable. Let us now see whether the first proposition, which is, that nothing is absolutely good except actions,—of which the second proposition is, as I have shown you already, only a corollary,—can better stand the test of an examination.

You will see that this proposition bears the same relation to the nature of good, as that which I have already refuted does to the manner in which it is perceived. It overlooks, as I have told you, the distinction between absolute good and moral good, and maintains that the idea represented by good is only a quality of actions. Is this doctrine as to the nature of good tenable? Is it true that there is no good which we can recognize except in actions? Let us see.

And, first, gentlemen, if this is true, it follows that the end of good actions is not distinct from the good actions themselves. Why ought I to do a good action? Because it is good. But why, according to Price, is it good? Only because the quality of good is perceived in it. The end of a good act, then, is the act itself. I act in such a way for the purpose of acting in such a way; or I refrain from acting in another way for the purpose of thus refraining. This is as much as to say, from the fact that the act is good, I may infer that its result is so too; thus, for instance, because it seems to me that the act

of knowing is good, I may infer that knowledge is a good; and, because it seems to me a good action to advance the happiness of my fellow-beings, I may infer that the happiness of my fellow-beings is a good. But the goodness of the result is only a derived goodness, inferred from that of the act, which alone is immediate. Every good end, therefore, is made so by the goodness of the act, and every bad end by the evil of the act, which produces it. A man's ignorance is an evil only because it is an evil in him that he does not enlighten his mind, or an evil in others not to deliver him from this ignorance. In themselves, ignorance and knowledge are indifferent; so that, to learn whether an end is good or bad, we must see whether the act which tends to produce it is good or bad. If this is true in relation to man, it must be also true of God. He could have had no other end, in creating the world, than to do a good act; and it is because the act by which he created universal order seemed to him good, that universal order was created. This order could have had no other goodness, in his view or in itself, than as a result of this act.

It follows still further from this, that whatever is not an act, or the result of an act, can have no goodness, either immediate or derived. Thus health in itself is no better than sickness, and one can be considered a good, and the other an evil, only in so far as the one is the consequence of a good act, and the other of a bad one, committed by ourselves or our parents. So that sickness, when it results from good acts, becomes good, better than health produced

by indifferent and bad acts. In a word, nothing is good in itself except an action, or by its relation to an action; and whatever is neither an action nor the effect of an action can have no real goodness, and must be valueless, except as related to our happiness or some natural desire.

And, as the appreciation of the result of an action, if derived from the appreciation of the action itself, supposes a knowledge of the action in him who judges, and as the same result may be produced by many different actions, it follows that no result nor end can have any character, nor be judged as either good or bad, so long as we are ignorant of the act by which it was produced. On the contrary, the result and end of actions does nothing to determine their character; for, if it did, the character of the actions would be derived from it; and if thus derived, all goodness or evil cannot be inherent in actions; and there must be something not an action which possesses in itself good or evil, because it communicates these qualities to the actions.

It is not necessary, I suppose, to go further, to show the evident confusion, introduced by Price's system, between two kinds of good altogether different, though closely united — moral good, which is and can be only a quality of actions, and absolute good, which can be recognized in many things besides actions, and which belongs to them independently of actions. These things, good in themselves, I call *ends*, because they may become the ends of conduct and of action; and I believe them to be good in themselves, only as the elements of a supreme end, which is the true

good, and the reality represented by the word *good*. That there are such ends, gentlemen, that they are good in themselves, and that their goodness is not determined by that of the actions which produce them, but, on the contrary, that the goodness of no action can be determined except by that of these ends, are facts which, evidently, the hypothesis of Price has misconceived; and yet I assert that they can be easily established—that they are strongly attested by the common faith of mankind.

Is it not plainly contrary to the opinions of men, that no end is good in itself, and independent of the actions which produce it? What! is knowledge in itself indifferent, and no better than ignorance? or is it better only because the act of acquiring it is morally good; and that of remaining in ignorance morally bad? What! is this true, too, of the happiness of men, when compared with misery? of sympathy, when compared with enmity? of health, when compared with sickness? and of many other ends, which it would be tedious to mention? Assuredly, nothing can be more contrary to the universal convictions of men than such a doctrine. In the universal opinion, science is considered good in itself, ignorance bad in itself, and the happiness of men in itself better than their misery; and men are far from believing that the goodness or badness of these ends comes from the moral character of the acts of gaining intelligence and of being benevolent on the one hand, or of remaining in ignorance and doing injury on the other. On the contrary, every one believes that it is the goodness or badness of these ends which

renders the acts which tend towards them morally good or bad. To deny this would be to deny the deliberations which we enter into every day and every moment; it would be to deny our most common and familiar moral judgments. How do I proceed, in many cases, to determine whether an action which I am about to do is good or bad? I examine the end sought, and the result which the act is calculated to produce; and it is only by my judgment as to this end or result, that I can decide upon the morality of the action. Do I not daily conceive of ends to be pursued, and say the end is good? and to act for its attainment with a consciousness that my conduct is calculated to accomplish it, is consequently lawful and honorable? Again, when, on the other hand, I see my fellow-men perform acts, do I not, before determining the morality of their conduct, seek to discover what ends they pursue, and suspend my judgment until they are known? And, I ask now, what means the word *end*, if there is no such thing, and if the doctrine of Price is true? What can this word signify, except the object of an action? The end of an action, then, is the thing in view of which it is done; so that, if a thing is only the result of an action, it is simply an effect, and not an end. Now, if all results were indifferent, if they had no character in themselves, and derived their goodness only from that of the acts which produce them, we should never consider before acting, and conduct would be directed only to *effects*, and never to *ends*; the words *end* and *object* would be unmeaning, and would have no place in human speech.

I am aware, gentlemen, that the goodness of actions, or moral good, may and ought to be one of our ends. But this is an ulterior result, which I will explain. What I complain of in Price is, that he has mistaken this final result of moral conceptions for the principle of these conceptions. Before the goodness of an act can be the end proposed in doing it, the act must previously have been recognized as good; and I cannot find fault with Price that he has overlooked so evident a truth as this. But what I do reproach him with is, that he did not see that every good action whatever presupposes the goodness of certain ends. Assuredly, if any one virtue seems to be immediately perceived, it is justice. And yet, what is it to be just? It is to refrain from doing wrong to another. But, before we can thus refrain, we must know in what his good consists. There must, therefore, be such a good. Now, in what does it consist? Certainly not in the quality of his conduct; for this constitutes his morality, and not his good. Evidently, then, this good consists in the end to which he is destined. I must know, therefore, the end of my fellow-beings, before I can treat them with justice; and justice in me is only a respect for this end. But every created thing has an end, even trees and plants; and yet I have no scruple in preventing trees from accomplishing their end, and I do it without any consciousness of being unjust. There must, then, be, in the end of a fellow-creature, something that makes it worthy of my respect, and which is not to be found in that of the tree. And, whatever this is, it is something which, being peculiar to the end of man, makes



a regard for it a good act. Whence you see, that the goodness of a just act—of that very act whose moral quality is most immediately perceived—is connected originally with the goodness of an end. This is what Price has failed to see. What has now been said is not inconsistent, however, with the fact, that justice, or, yet more, moral good, which comprehends justice and every other virtue, may finally become an end for conduct.

But I perceive, gentlemen, that I cannot carry out these observations without entering upon the exposition of the true foundations of morality; and that is not the subject of the present lecture. I have said enough to prove, that, independently of moral good, all our deliberations and moral judgments prove that there is another good, which, far from being derived from this, evidently gives it its origin; and thus, that the proposition that good is only a quality of actions, is no less contradicted by facts than the proposition that goodness in actions is a simple quality immediately perceived. Thus, gentlemen, these two propositions must be either both false or both true; for, as I have already said, they are closely connected together, and form only one and the same doctrine, which is that of all the moral systems which consider good indefinable. Indefinable it indeed is, if moral good is the only good; and if indefinable, then is it also true that moral good is the only good. These two propositions are inseparable; so that it is sufficient to show that one is irreconcilable with facts, and consequently false, to show that the other cannot be maintained. The refutation of each, therefore, confirms that of the other.

But this twofold refutation is yet more confirmed by the avowal of Price himself, who, notwithstanding his system, and even in his system has recognized all that I have sought, in this lecture, to establish? How has he done this? I will tell you.

You have already often remarked, gentlemen, that the necessity of bringing their systems into harmony with facts, and with the universal consciousness of men, invariably leads philosophers to introduce contradictions into their systems, that they may have the air of explaining every thing. We have seen how the selfish philosophers have done this, in substituting the general good in place of their more narrow principle of private good. We have seen how Smith has done it, by introducing into his theory the fiction of the impartial spectator; and we have been obliged, in forming a correct judgment of these doctrines, to bring them back to their fundamental principles, and to separate from them all that is heterogeneous. Price, gentlemen, has unguardedly fallen into the same error, and used a similar artifice, if we may apply such a name to an *involuntary* paralogism. Among the consequences of his system, which we have described, there are several which could not escape his attention. For instance, he could not avoid seeing, that, according to his theory of immediate perception, all reasoning, all discussion, all demonstration would be as foreign to the appreciation of actions as they are to that of the primary and secondary qualities of matter. And yet he could not disguise to himself the fact that men do reason and discuss upon moral questions. Price, gentlemen, has been bound,

therefore, to seek an explanation of these facts in his system ; and to find it he has been led to inquire, in the first place, to what end all these reasonings and discussions in moral questions are directed. He has been compelled, consequently, to see that they are directed to the accompanying circumstances of actions, which, in proportion as they are changed, alter their character. It would seem, therefore, as if he must have been led to conclude that actions are judged by these circumstances, and, consequently, that the moral good or evil of actions, instead of being an intrinsic quality, is resolved into the relation between actions and circumstances. But the hypothesis, that moral good is a quality of actions, was too deeply rooted in his mind. He considered this as settled and undeniable. Instead, therefore, of deducing from the fact consequences which would have overturned his hypothesis, Price took the more simple course of including these attendant circumstances in his definition of an action, and of considering them integral parts of the actions. He, therefore, has said, By an action, I do not mean an act, separated from its attendant circumstances ; for an act thus considered has no moral character ; but I mean the act, with its motive and its end — the act, with the circumstances of its agent and its object ; for all these are essential elements of the action, and according as the circumstances vary does the action change.

This Price has said, merely in passing, as if it was an obvious and simple thing, which no one could question. And, in fact, gentlemen, it never would

be disputed by common sense; for common sense agrees in recognizing, with Price, that the moral quality of an action depends upon its motive and its end, and upon the circumstances of its agent and its object. This cannot be denied. Daily experience proves that an isolated act has no moral quality, but that it takes its character from its attending circumstances, and changes with their change. Common sense, therefore, raises no objection to this definition of an action. But, gentlemen, there is something that does deny and cry out against this definition, and with good reason. Do you know what it is? It is the system of Price itself—his entire system. Common sense is satisfied, but the system of Price cannot be. This definition of an action is fatal to it. This system alone has reason to complain, therefore, because it alone suffers; and Price is reduced to the alternative, therefore, either of giving up his definition, or of rejecting his system.

Let me ask you, gentlemen, to observe, for a moment, in what manner an action would be judged, and in what its goodness would consist, if the definition is true. Undoubtedly, if Price had spoken only of the motive, the contradiction to his system would have been less; for, in whatever way the goodness of an action is perceived, and in whatever its goodness consists, the agent, to be good in what he does, must still act in view of this goodness. It might be said, therefore, that the consideration of the motive regards only the goodness of the agent, and not that of his action. But the end of the action is quite another matter. The end—this is the part of the definition

which is so hostile to the system of Price; for the end of an action is the object to which it tends. The end, therefore, is relative to the act, and not to the agent. And yet more; the end is distinct from the act; they are two separate things. If, then, an action can be judged only by its relation to its end, this end must be perceived before it can be judged; and only from the nature of the end can that of the action be determined; so that an act will be good if it has a certain end, and bad if it has a different one. Its goodness, then, is its relation of conformity to a certain end; its evil, its relation of conformity to some other end. The goodness of actions is not, therefore, the only goodness; there is also a goodness of ends. Yet more; the goodness belongs originally to the end, and not to the action; and the goodness of the action is merely derived. Again, in determining that there are good ends, we obtain a definition of that which is good in itself; and as the goodness of acts is their conformity to good ends, we obtain also a definition of this moral goodness, or of the quality assumed to be indefinable, by which actions are constituted good. But all this is precisely what the system of Price has denied, and what Price, consistently with his system, has endeavored to disprove. Has he not denied the distinction between absolute good and moral good? Has he not affirmed that there is no good except in actions? Has he not said, that goodness in actions is a simple and indefinable quality? Has he not maintained that it does not at all consist in the relation between an act and an end, or an external object? Has he not refused to

admit any of the definitions which have been offered of this end, on the hypothesis that it really exists? Has he not refuted, at length, all these definitions? And, nevertheless, his own definition of an action reëstablishes all that he has overthrown. In making it, he denies whatever he has before affirmed, and affirms whatever he has before denied. Price may choose, then, between his definition and his system — between his whole book and a passage in it. Both cannot coëxist; one or the other must be given up.

But this is not all. The definition comprehends in the act, in addition to the end, the circumstances of its agent and its object. And Price develops his thought in saying, if, in regard to a particular being, under certain circumstances, I ought to act in one way, I ought to act in another way under other circumstances, and in regard to another being. This is perfectly intelligible, gentlemen, and I find no difficulty in comprehending it. I may strike a tree because it is a tree, and I am a man; I must not strike my neighbor because he is also a man; but I may strike him if he attacks me, for then his circumstances and mine are changed. This is as much as to say, that, in order to characterize the act, I must have a perception of my nature and of the tree's; of my nature and of my neighbor's; of the relations between myself and these two beings, arising from our respective natures, and of all the facts in regard to them and to myself, which are expressed by the vague word *circumstances*. Is this, then, what this system means by an *immediate perception* of a simple and indefinable quality in an action, or is it not?

If it is not what it means, then let Price withdraw his definition of an action; if it is, then let him reconcile the fact, such as his definition describes it, with the formula in which he expresses his system. What terms shall we make use of, I ask, to designate the perception of solidity in bodies, or the conception of the space which contains them, if we call the complicated process which this definition indicates *an immediate perception*, and the moral character which results from this process, *a simple and indefinable quality* of actions? For either my nature, and the tree's, and my neighbor's, and all my circumstances and theirs, do, in spite of language, make a part of the action, and then the quality, which is constituted by the relations of these things with each other, is not simple, and, consequently, not indefinable; or the action is entirely included in the act of striking the tree or the man, and, then, it has no quality, either simple or complex, definable or indefinable. Accept the second branch of the dilemma, and there is no perception at all, for there is nothing to perceive. Prefer the first, and there is neither an immediate perception, nor any perception of a quality at all; but, first, a conception of many very different things, then a view of the relations between them, and, lastly, an induction from these relations to the action; and such an induction is really made, inasmuch as the appreciation of the action implies all these notions, and, consequently, is derived from them. By either hypothesis the system is overthrown; it is destroyed by the definition; it perishes without the definition; and yet more, this

definition has the singular merit of proving that it is necessary to consider the nature of things and the relations thence derived, in order to appreciate the morality of actions, in the face of a refutation, called out by the system of Clarke, which makes the goodness of actions consist in their conformity to the relations derived from the nature of things.

And now, gentlemen, I ask again, Where shall we look for the true opinion of Price? If it is contained in his definition of an act, it is there only as a germ, and must be unfolded and developed. If it is expressed in his system, we must strike out the definition; for the system and the definition contradict each other, and we know not how to form from both a consistent unity. What must we do in such a case of embarrassment? Let us leave Price to unravel the difficulty as he can, and confine ourselves to drawing from his definition the confession which confirms all that I have attempted, in this lecture, to demonstrate: this confession is, that the two propositions on which are founded the class of systems now under consideration — first, that the idea of good represents nothing but moral good, and secondly, that moral good is a simple and indefinable quality, immediately perceived in actions by reason, or the moral sense, which two propositions are intimately connected, and form a true system — are equally untenable and irreconcilable with facts.

This, gentlemen, is a result at which I have wished to arrive, in pursuit of which I have entered



into this long exposition, and still longer criticism of the system of Price. When examining systems far removed from the truth, we can move quickly; for the error being great, we can soon point it out and refute it; but in proportion as systems approach the truth, the error becomes more subtle and difficult of detection. We have already remarked this difference, in passing from the criticism of the selfish system to that of the instinctive system. In passing from the instinctive system to that of Price, we are made more sensible of it still. Indeed, the system of Price comes so near to the truth, that it wears more of its aspect and distinguishing features than any which we have hitherto met with; and, therefore, has it been much less easy to unveil its disguise, and demonstrate its errors. Still, gentlemen, it is on this account only the more important to determine its nature precisely; for, in so doing, we have taken a new step in the investigation in which we are engaged.

Moral good is distinct from the good of instinct, or of self-love; and intuitive reason can alone reveal it. This is what our criticism of the instinctive and selfish systems has taught us. But, among the systems which admit this third kind of good, we have seen two different opinions prevailing. Some declare moral good to be a simple, indefinable quality, immediately perceived in actions by reason; others consider it as a relation of actions to absolute good, and limit themselves to ascertaining in what absolute good consists. Now, it is impossible that we should advance further, without having first examined and

determined which of these two opinions represent the truth. This is what we have attempted to do in the last two lectures. We have examined the first of these opinions, and have concluded, not only that it is contradicted by facts, but also that these same facts declare the truth of the second. We have made a step in advance then. Of two different ways which the rational systems open before us, we have discovered which is the right one. It only remains that we pursue it. We shall here meet with rational systems of the second category, which, recognizing beyond moral good an absolute good, have sought to discover the essential character of the latter, and thus decide in what the former consists. Recognizing, as these systems do, both the distinct existence of these two kinds of good, and the necessity of defining the one in order that we may determine the other, we have merely to inquire what definition they give; for this is the only point which remains to be settled. We will review their opinions, then, upon this final question. But we will do so without attempting to criticise them; for it is plain that I should then be carried into an examination of the true definition of absolute good, and thus be led into an exposition of my own theory. I shall limit myself, therefore, gentlemen, to a rapid sketch of the principal definitions which have been given of absolute good, merely making a few hasty reflections on these definitions, which having done, I shall drop my character of historian, and, assuming that of the philosopher, shall set before you my ideas upon the fundamental questions of ethics. Only after these have

been presented to your attention, shall we be in the situation to review the systems which have given a definition of absolute good, and be able to judge of their idea in the light of our own. To the criticism of these systems I shall devote one, and only one, lecture more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In reviewing, after several months, this criticism of Price, I do not find it strictly accurate. To make it so, however, would demand an entire reconstruction of these two lectures; and, therefore, I have preferred to alter nothing. The exposition of my ideas on the fundamental questions of ethics will correct whatever has now been left incomplete.

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## LECTURE XXIV.

RATIONAL SYSTEMS. — WOLLASTON. — CLARKE AND MONTESQUIEU. — MALEBRANCHE. — WOLF.

GENTLEMEN,

I ANNOUNCED to you that I should devote the lecture of to-day to giving an account of some of the rational systems which have attempted to define good. I now proceed to fulfil my promise. My exposition and criticism of these systems will be rapid. I shall limit myself, on the one hand, to pointing out the idea which each gives, both of good in itself, and of the derived goodness of actions; and, on the other, to an indication of the error of this twofold definition. A thorough criticism of these systems I postpone, as I have already forewarned you, until I shall have explained the fundamental principles of my own system.

The first which occurs to my mind is that of Wollaston, an English philosopher, who lived in the beginning of the eighteenth century, as exhibited in his work on natural religion. In a few words I will describe its essential characteristics.

According to this philosopher, good is truth; and the fundamental law of conduct — the duty from which

all others are derived — is to act conformably to the truth, or, in other words, not to deceive by actions. How does Wollaston proceed to establish this doctrine? As follows: He begins with the assertion that actions, like words, are signs, and that the truth may be expressed or disguised, affirmed or denied, by actions as well as by words. To establish this assertion, he attempts, first, to show how truth may be denied in actions. What is it, he asks, to break a contract? It is simply to affirm by an action, that it is not true that the contract was made. What is it to rob a traveller? It is to deny that the money which is taken belonged to him. Wollaston multiplies examples, taking care always to select bad actions, and tracing always these actions to some negation of one or more true propositions. This being done, and having thus demonstrated that truth may be contradicted by actions, he asks whether an act which denies one or more true propositions can be good. He maintains that it must necessarily be bad. The proofs which he gives are curious, from the fact that each one of them consists in showing absolute good under one of its aspects, and in making it appear that there is a contradiction between falsehood and good thus conceived. The proofs are as follows: first, an action which denies a true proposition, is equivalent to a false proposition. Now, a false proposition is bad; therefore, the action which is equivalent to it cannot be good. Secondly, an action which denies a true proposition denies the nature of things, and, consequently, is contrary to it. Now, is it not evident that an action which is contrary to the nature

of things is bad ? Thirdly, an action which denies a true proposition denies that which actually is. Such an action, therefore, is a revolt against God, the author of being, and against his will. Fourthly, it is, yet more, a revolt against order ; for what is order except the laws of things arising from their nature ? Fifthly, it is also a revolt against reason. To deny a true proposition is to affirm what is absurd ; and what is the affirmation of an absurdity, except a revolt against reason ? Sixthly, such an action is contrary to the nature of man ; for man is a rational being, and the peculiarity of rational natures is to see and love things as they are.

After having thus demonstrated that an action which denies one or more true propositions is bad, Wollaston goes one step further, and proves that a true proposition may be denied by omission as well as by commission ; or, what amounts to the same thing, that the omission is quite as much a sign as the action, and that we may affirm what is false, as well by the former of these signs as by the latter. And he has no difficulty in proving this ; for it is evident, for example, that, in not doing what we promise, we deny that it has been promised, as much as if we did something contrary to that promise. It would not be worth while to follow the author into the details of this proof.

You see, gentlemen, that his efforts are limited to establishing the essential nature of evil. But as evil is contrary to good, if the nature of the one is determined, that of the other follows as a matter of course, and the nature of what is neither good nor bad

equally. What, then, is a good action? It is one whose omission would be bad, or whose opposite would be a bad action. What, in the second place, is an indifferent action? It is one which may be done or omitted, without contradicting the truth. So that from the principle of his system is derived the essence of that which is good, of that which is bad, and of that which is indifferent in conduct; or, in other words, a solution of the fundamental problem of morality.

Wollaston, having thus established his doctrine, attempts to confirm it by showing that it is in harmony with facts. He shows, for example, that it is in harmony with the fact of a progressive development of moral ideas. In fact, if science is progressive, morality must be so too; for, as morality is nothing more than truth expressed in conduct, it presupposes a knowledge of truth; and in proportion as this knowledge, which is science, increases, morality must become more perfect. Hence an explanation of errors in morality, and of the difference recognized by common sense between mistakes and crimes. If we can be deceived in questions of morals, it is because we may be so deceived in science, that things will not be seen as they are. To make a mistake in moral conduct, is to affirm in action a proposition which is false, though believed to be true. The action is bad, but the agent is not culpable, because he does not wilfully deceive. Wollaston shows further, that his doctrine, far from altering the commonly recognized qualities of good, explains them. Thus truth, being immutable, because expressing the very nature of things, good is so too. Thus, there being

an eternal and real distinction between truth and falsehood, the like distinction separates good and evil. Whatever may be said of truth may be said equally of good, and the foundations of morality are as impregnable as those of science.

Such, gentlemen, is, in substance, the system of Wollaston. A few observations will be sufficient to show that it is incorrect; and first, let it be remarked, that, in adopting the principle of Wollaston, in the appreciation of actions, we must come to judgments which do not coincide materially with moral judgments. There is no bad action which does not express, equally with a good one, many true propositions. For example, if I poison any one with arsenic, I assuredly commit a crime; and, nevertheless, this action is conformed to many true propositions, and among others to this, that it is the property of arsenic to poison. The fundamental maxim of Wollaston, therefore, is too comprehensive, and confounds evil with good. In the second place, there are many truths which it is morally indifferent whether we affirm or deny by actions. For instance, two men are cold; one, to warm himself, draws near the fire, and the other to some ice. The action of the former affirms a true proposition, namely, that fire has the property of communicating warmth. This the act of the second, on the other hand, denies. What follows? Simply that his conduct is absurd, but not that it is immoral. The action of the one is reasonable, and that of the other foolish; but this is all. There is nothing moral in the action of the one, nor immoral in that of the other. Absurdity and



immorality are not coincident, and one should not be substituted for the other, in an attempt to explain the fundamental principle of ethics. In the third place, it follows, from the maxim of Wollaston, that, when we meet a traveller in a wood, it is equally a crime to maintain that his purse does not belong to him, as to take it, for in either case we equally deny the same true proposition. This is ridiculous, and shows still more clearly how different absurdity is from immorality. And lastly, I affirm that this hypothesis would destroy all inequality among virtues; for if morality consists in not denying a true proposition, then all good actions are equally good, and no difference can be discovered between them.

But, yet further, this fundamental maxim is not coincident with psychological phenomena. Such a maxim must not only explain the moral judgments of humanity, but consciousness must also testify that we are really governed by this principle in our actions. Now, I ask, when I refrain from robbing a person, is my motive the fear of denying a true proposition? Assuredly not; and it is quite plain that I do not think at all of the various truths which my action affirms or denies. The maxim of Wollaston, therefore, is no less contradicted by consciousness than by the moral judgments of mankind.

I pass, now, gentlemen, to the consideration of a second system, more famous than this of Wollaston — a system which was that of Montesquieu, but which previously had been taught by that friend of Newton, and adversary of Leibnitz, the celebrated Clarke. The principle of this system is, that good actions

are those which are conformable to the nature of things. Clarke thus describes his idea, in a treatise on the existence of God, and the laws of the moral nature. The author sets out from an examination of the essential nature of obligation; but, as obligation is founded upon the idea of good, to discover this foundation and to give a definition of good are the same thing. And Clarke expressed this question under the former of these two modes rather than the latter, only because his efforts were directed against the system of Hobbes, whose works had created, at that time, a great sensation, and were producing disastrous effects on morality. You are aware that this philosopher asserted that selfishness is the foundation of duty; and Clarke, therefore, began, in his efforts to overturn this foundation, by refuting the principle of selfishness under every possible form which it can assume. He shows that we do what is right, and seek good in actions, neither to obey the will of God, nor to secure the recompenses and avoid the sufferings of another life; nor to advance our own private good; nor with a view to social utility; nor in obedience to a primitive contract between men, in the origin of society; nor from regard to laws and the will of legislators. It would be useless to review, at this time, all these pretended foundations for the sentiment of obligation; for we have already considered them. It is sufficient to remark that Clarke rejects them all.

As obligation is founded on none of these maxims, Clarke seeks for its true foundation, and his system is as follows:—God, in creating things, gave to them

all peculiar natures, and, in virtue of these natures, established relations which unite them, and which, taken together, make up the universe. The creation is, then, only a collection of different beings, united together by relations derived from their respective natures. Now, as nature, or the essence of things, is real and immutable, and as the essence of things produces the relations which unite them, these relations are as real and immutable as things themselves, or as their essence. These relations, says Clarke, constitute universal order. Reason conceives these different relations. It conceives that they constitute the laws of things, and hence immediately concludes that they should be respected by every free and rational being. Hence, for every being who is capable of comprehending them, arises an obligation to regulate his conduct conformably to his relations. When conduct or actions are conformed to these relations, they are good; in the opposite case, they are bad. Such is the definition of moral good, as derived from the idea of good in itself—of absolute good. And you readily see that, as this latter is immutable, since the relations of things are derived from their nature, which is immutable, moral good must be so too, because consisting in a conformity of conduct to these relations. Obligation, according to Clarke, is derived immediately from the conception of good, that is to say, of order. And it is derived from this immediately, on account of the agreement between order and reason. It is essential to reason to respect order, as soon as the idea of it is conceived, order being its law. Hence, gentlemen, arise all duties,

and the manner of determining what they are. Whence, asks Clarke, are derived our different duties? and what is our mode of determining them? Suppose that we were ignorant of our own nature and of the nature of God—that God and man, in other words, were both unknown;—could we tell what duties man owes to God, or even that he owes any? We could not. But suppose that the nature of man, on the one hand, and that of God, on the other, are known; then, at once, we perceive the necessary relations which are derived from these two natures. We see immediately that one of these beings owes duties, and that the other is the object to whom he owes them; and we recognize the kind of duties which are owed. In a word, we discover that the rule of our conduct towards God arises from the established relations between his nature and ours.

Again; bring two men together, and inquire what relations exist between two beings of separate though equal and identical natures, and we shall see that, if our duties to our fellow-beings are different from those which we owe to God, it is because the relations between man and man are different from those between man and God; and we shall find that, as the duties of man towards God arise from respect to the latter, so the duties of man towards man arise from a respect for the former. And Clarke, like all other philosophers who define good, hastens to show that this definition of good agrees with the progress of moral ideas, and explains it. Originally, he says, we know neither the nature of beings, nor the relations thence arising. There is, therefore, a science, whose object

it is to determine these relations, and which — as, like all other sciences, it has a beginning and an end — is susceptible of development. Now, as morality presupposes this science, morality must follow its progress, and advance with civilization. Such, in a few words, are the main arguments of Clarke, and the fundamental ideas of his system.

Montesquieu, whom I have classed with Clarke, had precisely the same idea of good. He explains his system in the first words of his work entitled *L'Esprit des Lois*, in saying, "Laws are the necessary relations which are derived from the nature of things." By laws he means the rule of what is good. And he proves that, by *necessary relations*, he understands, as Clarke does, those which are *necessarily derived* from the nature of things, by saying, in addition, "Before intelligent beings actually existed, they were yet possible; there were, therefore, possible relations between them, and, consequently, possible laws." Montesquieu goes further, and shows — which is also in fact the view of Clarke — that these relations are not an arbitrary act of God, in this third passage of the same chapter — "God has made laws, because they had certain relations to his wisdom and power;" which amounts to saying that these laws themselves, or, what is the same thing, the nature of different beings, and the relations thence derived, are not dependent even upon the will of God, who created them; and the cause of this is, that, being the works of God, the reason for them exists in him, and the reason of what God has made, cannot be distinguished from his nature, which is necessary and eternal. The

nature of God is, in fact, the only truly absolute, necessary, eternal existence; and to it, in the last analysis, must be referred the immutability and necessity of whatever is necessary and immutable. If absolute good, then, is necessary and immutable, it is because the reality represented by this word is nothing else than the nature of God himself, or a manifestation and necessary effect of this nature. Thus, in the hypothesis of Clarke and Montesquieu, good would seem to be arbitrary, if things and their relations were the effects of the arbitrary will of God, and if we conceived that this will could give to things another nature, from which might result other relations. This is what these two philosophers have thought, and what Montesquieu has expressed in the last sentence quoted. And the defect of the system is already indicated in the difficulty felt by all in admitting that the beings peopling creation are all exactly such as they could not but be, and that God could have created neither more nor less than these, nor any differing from them. But this is not the place to discuss this great difficulty, which, as you will hereafter see, the true idea of good fully satisfies. It is sufficient to have shown you, by these three quotations from Montesquieu, that his doctrine is entirely the same with that of Clarke. I will now submit to your attention some observations in regard to this system, which, as you will remark, are entirely identical with those already made upon the system of Wollaston.

Between judgments based upon this fundamental maxim — “Act conformably to the nature of things” —

and moral judgments, there is the same want of material coincidence as between moral judgments and those which arise from the definition of Wollaston. In the first place, it is evident that every act, which is not wholly absurd, is conformed to many of the existent relations of things; and I adopt for illustration the example, already used, of poisoning by arsenic. Assuredly, this act is conformable to the nature of man, to that of arsenic, and to the relations between the two; this cannot be denied. Clarke's maxim, therefore, gentlemen, like Wollaston's, is too comprehensive. I allow that a good act is never a falsehood, but is always in harmony with truth; I allow, also, that it is conformable to the relations which arise from the nature of things; but the illustration shows that there are only some particular relations to which our conduct ought to correspond, and only certain true propositions, which we are bound to express by our acts. What are these relations and propositions? and why are they to be selected and preferred? These are questions which neither of these systems answers; which fact clearly proves that Clarke and Wollaston have not accurately conceived the idea of good, but other ideas, which, though related, perhaps, to this idea, are yet not identical with it; for, if they had disengaged the true idea, our moral judgments, and our moral judgments only, would have at once proceeded from the definition. But I go further, gentlemen, and say, that, if there are relations between things with which it is wrong to act in conformity, there are also many relations, in regard to which it is a matter of perfect

indifference whether we act in conformity or not. Thus, to use again an illustration already employed, it is acting conformably to the nature of things to refresh ourselves with ice, and warm ourselves with fire. But, as such conduct is only reasonable, and not virtuous, so its opposite is not criminal, but only foolish. Clarke says that it is the essence of reason to respect order; that is, to use the language of his system, the relations derived from the nature of things. This is true; but in what sense? In the sense that reason cannot, without abdicating its office, fail to recognize these relations; for, since they exist, it is absurd and contrary to reason, whose law is truth, to deny them. But does it follow, because these relations constitute truth, that they also constitute good, and are the law of reason, in such a sense that reason feels itself morally obliged to respect them in action? This is by no means what facts prove. We are in error, and act without conformity to the nature of things, when we attempt to warm ourselves with ice; but such conduct is not immoral; the two spheres of absurdity and immorality do not coincide. This defect of Clarke's system is confirmed by the fact that the psychological coincidence is equally wanting with the external coincidence. Undoubtedly, we are obliged, in many cases, before we can determine what we ought to do, to consider both our own nature and the nature of other beings, and the relations existing between us. But observe, we do this for the purpose of determining another fact, which is a knowledge of what is good and of what we ought to do. And, unless we are led to some



decision upon this point, our inquiries fail to communicate the light we seek; moreover, we do not need, for this end, to know all the relations which arise from the nature of things, but only certain relations. So that, though consciousness, when imperfectly examined, may seem to give some appearance of truth to Clarke's definition, it entirely contradicts it, when more faithfully consulted. #

I pass now, gentlemen, to a third system—that of Malebranche. Connected as the moral ideas of this philosopher are with those of his metaphysics, you will be unable to comprehend the former without at least a superficial acquaintance with the latter.

You have all probably heard repeated that fundamental maxim of Malebranche—"We see all things in God." What is the import of this maxim? I will tell you, in a few words.

Malebranche admitted, what was considered established by the philosophers who preceded him, that we see, not things themselves, but the ideas of these things, in our own minds. Starting with this opinion, Malebranche did not allow, because we had the idea of a tree, that a tree therefore existed. He granted only, that, as the idea of the tree is not produced by the effort of our own minds, it must have some originating cause distinct from ourselves. This cause he sought to discover; and, reviewing successively the various theories which had been suggested—that these ideas are produced in us by objects—that they are innate—that God creates them in our minds—and, finally, that our souls are united with the divine intelligence which includes the ideas of all possible

beings, and that we see these ideas as there existing — he believed it to be susceptible of demonstration that this last supposition is alone admissible. He laid it down, therefore, as a principle, that, excepting the ideas of what passes within us, we see all other ideas in God, who is the essence of the intelligible world, and with whom our intelligence is in perpetual communion. Such is the meaning of the celebrated maxim of Malebranche, that “we see all things in God.”

It follows, from this doctrine, that, as all individual intelligences can see, in God, the ideas which each intelligence sees there, ideas are not peculiar to any, but common to all, and belong to God alone. Each individual possesses, therefore, first, the idea of himself, which is peculiar to him, and then ideas of all other existences, which, being in God, where they are seen, are a portion of absolute truth, belong only to God, and are common to all individuals who perceive them. Malebranche finds, as he thinks, in facts, a strong confirmation of this theory. No one, beside myself, can feel the pain that I feel; pain, then, emanates from me, and is wholly personal. But every intelligent being can see the truth that I see; this truth, then, emanates neither from them nor from me; and yet it must emanate from some intelligence; this can be only God, to whom, therefore, it belongs. Reason, therefore, or the aggregate of truths, is substantial with God; and, as we are rational only by partaking of reason, this reason is appropriate not to us, but to him; if it belonged to us, we should be entirely and perfectly reasonable, which we are

not; we see only a portion of truth, because we see only a portion of the ideas which are in God; and therefore are we imperfect and infinitely beneath him.

Such, gentlemen, are some of Malebranche's metaphysical ideas. The moral consequences which he deduces from them are as follows:—

When I perceive a truth, it is certain that God perceives it too; for he perceives all truth. Consequently, what I think is a portion of what God thinks; in other words, there is a communion between God and me, in the perception of truth. As God perceives with perfect clearness all truth, and all ideas, I cannot think all that he thinks, nor know all that he knows; but, as what I do think and know constitute a portion of truth, God thinks it, God knows it. I know, then, a part of what God knows, and think in part as he thinks.

Now, two kinds of relations exist between ideas; first, relations of agreement and disagreement, which constitute speculative truths, and do not concern morality; secondly, relations of perfection, which alone do concern it. For example, the idea of man seems to me to contain more perfection than the idea of an animal; the idea of an animal more than that of a plant; and the idea of a plant more than that of a stone. From these relations of perfection, I am led to love and esteem most that which is most perfect; in other words, to these inequalities of perfection correspond in me different degrees of esteem and love, which seem to be their necessary consequences. But how do I perceive these relations of

perfection? I see them in God. God, then, perceives them as I do; and they excite in him the same inequalities of love which I experience. But God, says Malebranche, can have but one kind of love — love for himself; God loves himself unchangeably; he can have, therefore, he adds, but one motive for action — self-love. God is all perfection, however, so that the love of himself is only the love of perfection. Now, what are the ideas of different beings which exist in him, and these different beings themselves, if it is supposed that he has, in creating them, realized these ideas? They are emanations from himself; and it is because they are such emanations, that they have their different degrees of perfection. In loving them, therefore, God still loves himself, and loves perfection. But this love must necessarily be proportioned to the degree of perfection; hence the love of God varies with the degree of perfection manifested in the ideas of these different beings, and realized in them, if they exist. His conduct must be governed by the same law, as his only motive is love. If it is supposed, therefore, that God has in part realized his ideas, he will act in relation to the beings thus produced, proportionally to the love which they inspire, that is to say, proportionally to their degree of perfection. And now what follows? It follows, that, whenever, in loving things, our love is proportioned to their degree of perfection, our love is in a communion with God's love, and that, whenever our conduct is regulated by such a love, we act in communion with him, that is to say, according to his law, which is the law of reason and of truth.

As we can think and know the truth with God, so can we love and act with him, if we take for our rule the relations of perfection in things, which is the true law of love and conduct. These relations of perfection constitute order. To love, according to these relations, is to love order, and to be in conformity with it. Whence you see, that the love of virtue is only a respect for order. Its motive, then, is the love of perfection; its proper object is God, who is perfection itself, and the source of all that is found in beings; and whatever being, therefore, we love, if our love is directed to the perfection which is in it, we love not only with God, but we love, as he does, himself.

And, gentlemen, if we actually learn thus to proportion our love, and to regulate our conduct by the degrees of perfections in things, what is the effect upon ourselves? It is, that we not only love and act in communion with God, but also become more perfect; for, as our perfection consists in our likeness to God, the more we love him and act with him, the more do we resemble him, and so become perfect. Now, the more perfect we are, the more will God love us; for, as it is his necessary law to love himself, it must also be his law to love every thing in proportion to its degree of perfection and likeness to himself. But his conduct is not less necessarily regulated by his love, than his love is by degrees of perfection. The more, then, we follow the law of order, the happier will God render us; and thus will virtue produce happiness, and this not only in another life, but here and now, inevitably. For God cannot

alter the laws of his own conduct; he is irresistibly impelled to govern his acts by the degree of a being's perfections; and, as our perfection results immediately from our virtue, happiness must result from it equally.

Such, gentlemen, in a few words, and in a mode of description quite unworthy of this great philosophy, is Malebranche's theory, as to the nature of good.

The defect of this system is not its want of exactness; for it would be easy, by a slight change of form, to resolve it into the very system which I shall hereafter present to you. Its defect is, rather that it leaves the idea of order, into which it resolves the idea of moral good, extremely vague, by leaving in vagueness the idea of perfection, into which it resolves the idea of absolute good. Its defect, in other words, is, that it gives a definition of good which is so metaphysical and profound, that when, after hearing the definition, we attempt to settle what is meant by good and evil, and the way, accordingly, in which we should conduct ourselves, we are much embarrassed to discover the reality which these words denote. Thus it is only with great difficulty that Malebranche succeeds in deducing from his principle our duties to ourselves, to God, and to our fellow-beings. And, after all, he does not so much describe precise duties, as give general directions, which are characterized by like uncertainty and vagueness with his fundamental maxim. This vagueness, in which the idea of good is left, by Malebranche, seems to me to result from the fact that his morality is only his metaphysics,

presented under another aspect. Undoubtedly, the moral idea is only one side of the idea of God; and so long as this latter is undetermined, the former must be so too. But as many moralists, beginning with man, have failed in attaining the true idea of morality, because they had not the idea of God, so metaphysicians may equally fail, from wanting the idea of man. This, as it seems to me, was the case with Malebranche; and I cannot but think, that if, after having established his metaphysical theory, he had, instead of rigidly applying it, paid some attention to what observation reveals in man, the moral idea would have appeared to him under a form more in accordance with human sentiment, and more readily applicable to the practice of life. Let us not, however, forget, in thus finding fault with Malebranche, that this great metaphysician was a Catholic priest, and that he may, on this account, have avoided expressing his thought in too definite terms. For, notwithstanding his obscurity and mysticism, he gave but little satisfaction to theologians; and his life, in consequence, was one long controversy.

A system which seems, by its definition of good, to approach nearly to that of Malebranche, but which errs in just the opposite way, in not being metaphysical enough, is that of the celebrated disciple and successor of Leibnitz, Wolf, who has resolved the idea of good into that of perfection. I will tell you Wolf's mode of proceeding in determining his fundamental principle of ethics. But I hardly dare to refer you to his work on ethical philosophy, since, like all others which he wrote, it is of appalling di-

mensions. To give you an idea of it, it will be sufficient to state that his *Systema Moralis* fills five volumes quarto. You can judge from this of the size of the other portions of his philosophical system.

Wolf distinguishes two kinds of good; *personal good*, or that of each human individual, and *common good*, or that of all human beings collectively. In his somewhat barbarous phraseology, he calls the first *bonum suitatis*, and the second *bonum communionis*. And here let me remark, that, beside the individual man, Wolf takes no note of any other beings except men, which certainly is a narrow view. What is his idea of *personal good*? It consists, for every human being, in the perfection of his nature, which imposes upon him a twofold duty; first, self-preservation; secondly, self-perfection. To say that, when the nature of a being is given, good consists in the perfection of that nature, is the same as saying that this consists in the greatest development of all the elements of his nature. The first thing to be done, then, to secure this greatest development is, to take care that its elements are not impaired or destroyed, and, consequently, for a still stronger reason, that the being itself is not. Preservation is, then, the condition of good. This condition being secured, self-perfection, or the greatest possible development of all the constituent elements of the being, is the means of good. Such, then, according to Wolf, is the good of the individual, its condition and its means.

*Common good* consists, for each one of us, in the



perfection of all the individuals of our race, and of all the various associations by which they are bound to each other or to us. This also imposes a twofold duty; first, the preservation, secondly, the improvement, of every individual and of every community. Thus, in the circle of the family, we are bound to labor for the preservation and improvement both of the family itself and of all the members of which it is composed. And, in the circle of society and in that of humanity, our duties are the same. We see, thus, that, for every individual, good is divided into personal good, and the good of our fellow-beings; so that, for the attainment of personal good, we must preserve and perfect ourselves, and, for the advancement of common good, we must labor to preserve and perfect our fellow-beings separately, and the various associations of family, society, and humanity, in which they are united.

Wolf has clearly seen, gentlemen, the connection between these two kinds of good. The preservation and perfection of the individuals of which they are composed depend upon the development of families, of societies, and of the race. When these associations suffer, each individual suffers; while all developments of families, of societies, and of the race, add to the development—that is to say, to the power, intelligence, and happiness—of each separate individual. It is reciprocally true, that the good of communities results from the good of each of its members. These two kinds of good mutually imply and suppose each other; and hence it results that each individual has a strong reason for regarding the good of his

fellow-beings, while they have an equally strong reason for regarding his. This reason is not, however, that each of these kinds of good is seen to be a personal good by every human being, but that they are recognized as good in themselves; for, according to this system, the ideas of good and of perfection are identical, and, in the eyes of reason, individual good and common good have equal claims.

From all these ideas, Wolf deduces what he calls a general idea of good and evil; that is to say, a formula which defines a good action. This formula I will quote; you may gather from it an idea of the scholastic language which the author habitually uses:—

*“Actiones bonæ tendunt vel ad conservationem perfectionis essentialis, vel ad acquirendum accidentalem, vel ad conservationem generis humani et in specie familiæ suæ, ejusque perfectionem, vel ad conservationem perfectionis essentialis et acquisitionem accidentalis aliorum, vel denique ad perfectionem communem sociorum atque status eorundem.”*

Such is the general formula in which Wolf sums up his whole doctrine as to the nature of absolute good, and of a good action. This doctrine, which fills one whole volume of his work, constitutes the first part of his ethical philosophy. The second part has for its object to determine the various situations in which men may be placed, and to ascertain the acts which are good and bad in each of these. Upon this task Wolf enters in the four remaining volumes of his work.

What this system chiefly wants is a foundation.

Why does Wolf see fit to resolve the idea of good into that of perfection, rather than into some other idea? On this point he says not a word. He assumes that these ideas are equivalent, without declaring whether he considers this a self-evident axiom, or whether he is determined by some reason in adopting his opinion. One thing is certain — he actually gives no reason for so doing, and thus leaves it to be inferred that he considers them equivalent, by intuitive evidence. This arbitrary mode of proceeding is wholly unscientific; and if his system was the truest possible, every one would still be authorized to reject it.

When we examine this fundamental maxim of Wolf, we see at once that he resolves the idea of good into an idea which itself must be resolved. Doubtless it is more definite than the idea of good, and our duties may be deduced from it with less difficulty; and yet it leaves the question undecided as to the essential characteristics of our own perfection, and of the perfection of families, societies, and the human race. Certainly, it would seem as if Wolf ought to have devoted at least some pages of his five volumes to the solution of this question, as if he ought, by a metaphysical examination, to have fixed more precisely his general formula, and to have deduced from it some method which could be applied in ascertaining the perfection of any particular being. He might, then, have applied this method to man individually and collectively, and thus have arrived at strict and exact conclusions, by which his reader would have been enabled to judge of the excellence

of the results to which his system led. But Wolf has done nothing of the kind; and although his good sense did not allow him to misconceive either the essential nature of a being's perfection, or of the mode of ascertaining it, he still seems to have had no scientific assurance for what he thought and said; and his mode of determining the idea of perfection is as arbitrary as his conception of the idea. In a word, notwithstanding the alarming profusion of divisions, subdivisions, and classifications, with which his works abound, Wolf really was deficient in the scientific spirit, as you may readily infer from what has now been said of his ethics. I will add nothing to my remarks upon his theory now, but will reserve my criticism until after I have given an exposition of my own system.

**THE END.**













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